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# SKYLINE PROMENADES

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# SKYLINE PROMENADES

*A Potpourri*

BY J. BROOKS ATKINSON

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# SKYLINE PROMENADES

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# I

MOUNTAINS! What stuff has been written in praise of them, what buncombe from dithyrambic pens! "As soon as men begin to write on nature," Emerson remarked, "they fall into euphuism." Ah, well: let no one be too full of blame or too stiff-necked in criticism. These lofty habitations of the gods, where they live and play and now and then look down amused upon the swarm of life in the valleys, are not to be re-created in pallid sentences, nor adequately understood by the minds of journeyman scribblers. Sometimes on wind-swept summits, if your ears are very sharp, you may hear strange conversations in an argot never known before, a sweeping language at a pitch inarticulate to common ears; a jargon, it must be, even to ears most sensitively tuned; yet full of some stupendous import. Those who listen best cannot translate it. The best are wanting here. Yet the day may come —who knows how soon?—when some chance super-listener may catch the meaning of it all, and

"shake our disposition with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."

It would be illuminating to set down in an unimpassioned classification just what images and prejudices the word "mountain" brings to the minds of various people; in fine, to "dissociate the idea" in the manner of Remy de Gourmont. For in history mountains have meant various things, and even now they have no universal connotation. To earlier ages than this they brought all sorts of alarms; the Indians did not venture the higher summits lest they provoke the gods who lived there in awful seclusion. John de Bremble, who climbed to the top of the Great St. Bernard in 1188 warned his brethren against all such folly. "I have been on the Mount of Jove," he wrote, "on the one hand looking up to the heaven of the mountains, on the other shuddering at the hell of the valley, feeling myself so much nearer heaven that I was sure my prayer would be heard. 'Lord,' I said, 'restore me to my brethren, that I may tell them that they come not to this place of torment where the marble pavement of the stony ground is ice alone and you cannot set your foot safely.' There is every facility for a fall to certain death. Let us henceforth devote our pen to the narrative of more worthy matters." Less

than a century later the mountains were still somewhat monstrous. King Peter III of Aragon, climbing to the summit of Rochemelon, found there a lake inhabited by monsters. When the worthy monarch ventured to cast a stone into the water, "a horrible dragon appeared of enormous size which flew and darkened the air with its breath." But when Petrarch climbed Ventoux in 1335, he expanded and swelled after the fashion of moderns and moralized a little. And so, on this barren summit, he ushered in modernity.

But the mountains still stand for different things in the minds of different people: to natives they mean barriers; to lumber merchants, a far sweep of wealth; to tourists, a frolic; to climbers, a challenge; to revellers—boredom! To Pierre and me, who mask a bit of spleen under the purple robes of philosophy, they mean something more expansive, akin to composure. No doubt we ascribe virtues to them far too extravagantly and commit the "pathetic fallacy"; perhaps because we never go to them casually, but rather escape to them from the jangling city. To live for weeks in the tumble and confusion of the city; to look out of the windows on brick walls or smoky vistas; to see the fresh-fallen snow

quickly churned into dirt and slush, heaped into brownish masses like a vile excrescence and finally sluiced down the sewers; to know that spring has come only by the gentle warmth of the air and tender buds on trees in the park, and then at length to be in the quiet and sweet majesty of the mountains is not to be scrupulously impartial. No: the change is too swift, too sudden and complete for academic thinking. The beauty is too overwhelming; the intellect is drowned in emotion. Philosophy does not prevail before that deluge of beauty. It is only before or afterwards that one may examine one's emotions and attach to them scientific labels.

Before or afterwards? And not that, either. If one cannot think clearly about the mountains in the face of their beauty, neither can one think clearly about them from the roof-tops of the city many miles away. For then one is romancing, building castles of air. O vain and strutting *poseurs!* Are the cities, then, all evil and the mountains all virtue? Or are we merely giving free rein to buoyant fancies?

Pierre and I give free rein to such fancies and, in truth, enjoy the sensation vastly. Sometimes we profess to be seeking the truth, to be plotting the road to Nirvana; but that is only our mas-

querade. Like most of our fellows, we, too, are discontented with things as they are, and indulge in that platitude which hangs on every sophist's lips: that we are all the victims of civilization. We find the city distracting; we find the mountains by contrast to be places for general unburdening. There are those who sniff at our sentiments and find ragged holes in our reasoning. There are others, however, who for various miasmic reasons match our panegyrics with their own until the empyrean booms with verbosity. There are some few men of heroic self-confidence who have already deserted the city completely. But, pray, do not pin us down too relentlessly, or hold us by the beard of learning. We plead only for a chance to be ourselves, to feel soft earth at our feet, to see the broad expanse of the sky, to hear the wind in the spruce branches, to feel the warmth of the sun or the chill of the rain, to see valleys beneath us and peaks above, to bathe in icy pools in the silence of dark forests, to chop wood, hunt flowers, hear the birds, watch the clouds, eat, sleep and dream. For those who live in the city, the mountains have freshness and serenity, richness and flavour. Even the youngest of them are really mature. When Francis Parkman was lying ill in a rough

camp on the prairie, he wrote: "I used to lie languid and dreamy before our tent and muse on the past and the future, and when most overcome with lassitude, my eyes turned always towards the distant Black Hills. There is a spirit of energy and vigour in mountains, and they impart it to all who approach their presence."

* * *

*Pierre:* Very pretty, very pretty, indeed. I suppose someone will be taken in by all that sentimental claptrap, but not I. Now, why do authors always have to weep before they get started? Why can't they begin—bing!—right at the beginning? This sort of moralizing is a weariness of the flesh. Come, stop pirouetting and get down to business.

*The Author:* Have patience, and we shall all get under way presently.

*Pierre:* Patience indeed, my good man. Let me have some matter as well.

* * *

Although some three hundred years of human planning and toil had gone into the making of Boston, and Pierre and I, too, had squandered

most of our energy there, oiling the wheels and joints of the universe, it was amazing to see how casually we turned our faces away. Perhaps because we knew that two weeks hence we should return. Or perhaps because even at its best the city is no match for the country. At times that seems to be the truth. But what an insolent thought! If the vast sweep of wild mountain territory, virtually untouched by the "progress" of civilization, surpasses the complicated heap of the city for purposes of happiness, how abortive these achievements of mankind are! It was an old thought, smelling of philosophers no more recent than Socrates, but one, nevertheless, to be toyed with for a moment. It was not as though Boston were an ugly city. Some of those who make withering allusions to its past still recognize the unpretentious beauty of Beacon Hill, crowned by the gilded dome of the State house, mellowed by the informal sprawl of the Common, seasoned by rows of swell-fronted dwelling-houses—the whole agreeably redolent of unassuming life in homes. The cynics, the wags, the gay young criticasters to whom the world is an open book, concede that much to Boston. Yet two Bostonians, swelling with the New Englander's pride of place, rejoiced as they set out from the city.

* * *

*Pierre:* Come, come, come!

* * *

We did not upset the decorum of the North Station. We did not provoke envy—nor derision. Boston at 6:30 of a Sunday morning was far too sleepy for such emotions, and beds were too recently lain in to be so completely forgotten. A few phlegmatic and sullen passengers with heavy luggage had stirred out this early for the only Sunday train to the White Mountains, and a few employees of the railroad were contemplating the day without enthusiasm. But they were all too much concerned with their own fortunes to bother about us. Indeed, the most active place we had found in the city was the Waldorf lunchroom in Causeway Street which we had entered an hour earlier with the clatter of hob-nailed boots and a banging of duffle-bags stuffed with camping equipment. Although at that hour, thanks to the forehandedness of a state daylight-saving law, the moon was still conspicuous while the sun was absent, and night still lingered over the city, the white-coated counterman poured our coffee from steaming urns and

fetched dishes of ham and eggs from nowhere at all with an alacrity worthy of a week-day noon. In the arm-chair lunchrooms, night is only less brilliant day. Even though you visit them at that mysterious hour when the presses are pouring out the last editions of the morning newspapers, the coffee, the coffee-cakes and doughnuts, the bacon, the eggs, the ham and the hash are as wide awake as though they never slept. O marvel of alertness! As long as electric lights glitter all night on the enamelled walls of arm-chair lunchrooms, we need not despair of the world's business—nor its appetite.

If there had been any secret about our purpose, the packs would have given it quite away. For the equipment needed for a fortnight in the woods had risen impetuously above the drawstrings. After an hour or two of packing and repacking, Pierre, *le voyageur philosophique,* had compromised between decency and convenience by hanging the camp-ax outside his pack where it was exposed like a sinister warning to the curious gaze of all the world, while the lean handle of a frying-pan protruded from the top of my pack like the tongue of a collie gasping for air. That sort of thing passes well enough in the woods; but in the city it smacks of walking the streets unhatted;

socially, if not legally, it is regarded as indecent exposure. "Going camping?" inquired a loquacious waiter who was polishing the white top of the table after we had finished breakfast. Our packs standing naked in the corner, we could scarcely dissent. "That's the way to spend a vacation," he went on dogmatically. "No use hanging around the city. Take it easy. I wish I could go myself. Hope you have good weather and a good time." With a look of real shame, Pierre then restored to the table two napkins he had just stolen for camp dish-cloths. Upon such casual words rest the destinies of empires.

There was no such welcome in the smoking-car of the mountain train. We turned over a seat for our duffle-bags and made ourselves comfortable for the long ride ahead. The half-dozen passengers in the car were scowling over their Sunday newspapers; the conductor frowned on us with a sanctimonious air which suggested that Monday would be more appropriate than Sunday for such a journey as ours. But we were sufficiently light-hearted to maintain a sort of social amiability even in so depressing an atmosphere. After all, these men did not resent our presence; it was merely their Yankee manner.

After a day or two of drizzle and rain, the

sun had come up warm and red, and was sparkling on the wet marsh grass in Revere and Lynn, and on puddles in the streets, as the train gathered speed out of Boston. We settled down dutifully to the voluminous Sunday newspapers, to their news as well as their galvanic feature articles—about a woman traveller who had brought back from Turkey the melancholy news that harems were going out of fashion; about the boot-and-shoe "magnate" who was building a "baronial castle" in the Ossipee Mountains—"Ill fares the land," the journalist implied; about other commonplace circumstances which in the newspapers assume the proportions of cataclysms. The news on the front page portrayed the case of striking miners and railroad men, and forecast a gloomy and bitter winter for all. Of such stuff is city life made. Bound for the mountains with a week's provisions in our packs, however, it was difficult to become excited. When you are lunching or dining in the city, it is well to maintain a vicarious interest in such matters. But when you are bound for the mountains, you are not disturbed because the millennium has not yet appeared. If the German Republic should fall before you get out of the woods, or the British Cabinet crumble—why, that would be

worth knowing. Meanwhile, you have more pressing matters in hand.

After nearly five tedious hours of travel from Boston, through squalid cities and long miles of plain country, the train rolled across the Bear-camp Valley. We looked eagerly at the Sandwich Range as it came into view—Chocorua, Paugus, Passaconaway, Whiteface and, far away in the midsummer haze, Sandwich Dome, its eastern slopes torn with the ruin of fresh lumbering. The talk in the smoking-car had been boisterous and somewhat cheap. But as we rushed towards the mountains, conversation softened as though by an unspoken command, as though the very presence of the mountains rebuked pretentious chatter. As for Pierre and me, like sailors long out of port, we had seen land and were duly excited.

The sybaritic Henry Ryecroft, steeped for years in London, followed "an irresistible impulse" one spring to go into Devon. He was astonished at himself as soon as he arrived there. "Before I had time to reflect on the details of my undertaking, I found myself sitting in sunshine at a spot very near to where I now dwell —before me the green valley of the broadening Exe and the pine-clad ridge of Haldon. That

was one of the moments of my life when I have tasted exquisite joy. . . . I had stepped into a new life. Between the man I had been and that which I now became there was a very notable difference. In a single day I had matured astonishingly; which means, no doubt, that I suddenly entered into conscious enjoyment of powers and sensibilities which had been developing unknown to me." As we clambered from the car at Madison and felt the quiver of hot hay-fields and caught the first whiff of the country odours—trees, hay, dust, flowers—we knew ourselves likewise to be different men; not better men necessarily, not more honourable socially, but at least different; and it is well to know as many phases of oneself as possible.

Madison Station is four miles from the foot of Chocorua, where we planned to enter the woods. In the crowd which had swarmed to the station for the Sunday newspapers, there was one self-confident fellow with an auto "for hire." He lifted our duffle-bags into the auto while we took the rear seat. The little motor rattled over the rough country roads, bumped down the hills towards Chocorua Lake and clattered by the Pequaket post office to the foot of the Piper Trail. Above us rose the solid rock peak of

Chocorua, on smooth ridges of green forest. We unloaded our baggage, adjusted our packs; and then, with a final look at the mountain top, plunged into the woods, like Don Quixote on his first sally, "marvellous jocund and content," and with about an equal wit. From this moment our plans were somewhat undetermined. Our stores would last nearly a week without replenishment. Our spirits? Ah, there was the rub! Pierre carried a pocket microscope for examining plant blossoms. I carried opera glasses for hunting birds. *Pierre:* When we are fresh, we will lay out the day's work with your bird glasses. When we are tired, then, by Jupiter, we will use the microscope!

Although Chocorua (3,508 feet) is not one of the highest White Mountain summits, its beauty is the most haunting and the most memorable. On gentle slopes and ridges clad in beech, maple, birch and spruce, its summit of granite rises precipitously to a narrow tip, five hundred feet above the forests. From the south, across Chocorua Lake, this rocky peak cuts sharply into the sky —a challenge to all who climb. "Chocorua is not as big as the Matterhorn," writes Dr. Crothers, "but the principle is the same. It is every inch a mountain. And you have actually

climbed Chocorua, while you only looked at the Matterhorn from the hotel." Especially in the winter, Chocorua does not suffer by such a comparison. Even from Mt. Washington on a clear day, the triangular cone of Mt. Chocorua is the most striking summit on the horizon, the one to which the eyes instinctively return.

"A shadowy, cloud-cloaked wraith, with shoulders bowed,
He steals, conspicuous from the mountain-crowd."

No wonder that Lucy Larcom, Whittier and Frank Bolles found it an inexhaustible source of inspiration, or that many dwellers in the city gather at its base and on the shores of Chocorua Lake every summer. As we climbed on the Piper Trail and caught glimpses of the summit through the trees, we admired it, quite as the Zermatt visitor catches glimpses of the Matterhorn as he approaches that mountain valley and straightway forgets the surrounding peaks.

At this point in the narrative of our journey, it might be well to consider our packs. As we plodded along the Piper Trail in the sultry noontide heat, we were considering them with remarkable frankness. Now and then the pungent spruce woods through which the path meandered rang with manly vituperation. The packs hung

like lumps of lead; our shoulders ached and the sweat ran off our foreheads and arms and poured down our chests in tickling streams. O reader, perusing these pages in an upholstered easy-chair drawn close to the lamp: consider well your pack before you enter the woods. For automobiles and the lowlands have no greater reasons for being than the packs which hang on the backs of mountaineers.

At the North Station, Pierre had proposed that we weigh them. I protested that we could be no happier when we knew just how heavy they were. God knows our shoulders were balance enough; and if they ached, what matter whether the packs weighed twenty or one hundred pounds? The proof of the weight is the carrying. But being of that temperament which is not easily thwarted, Pierre drew the packs on the pan of the scales, and the full truth stared relentlessly from the dial: that mine weighed forty pounds while Pierre's weighed forty-four. We did not quarrel. On such matters Pierre is not disputatious, and fancies that though four pounds may be a physical burden, it is also a moral advantage. How unscrupulous one would be to tamper with moral balances! Yet, as we followed the mountain path, it was not noticeable that either of

us complained the less, or sat down any the less reluctantly when rests seemed advisable. It is well enough to pick up your bed and walk, but the miracle becomes really a miracle when the kitchen and larder are added. We had entered the forest at 10:45 (standard time). I had casually proposed that we climb the two miles and one-half to camp before luncheon, and cook our meal there leisurely. It is easy to make ambitious plans at the foot of a mountain. As the Piper Trail led us higher and the perspiration ran more freely, it was I again who breathlessly proposed that we cook luncheon beside Chocorua Brook, less than a mile from the foot of the trail. And the sun passed noon long before we heard that stream running noisily through a cool depression in the woods just as the steepest climbing begins.

To have lived in the woods, one must have cooked a meal over an open fire beside a noisy stream. That is as true as it is dogmatic. We crossed the brook gingerly from boulder to boulder and threw down our packs on a soft bank in the deep shade of the forest spruces. While Pierre drew out the frying-pan, mess-kits and provisions, I gathered an armful of dead wood and split up a small tree. We kindled the blaze

against a rock, filled the coffee-pot at a pool in the brook, suspended it over the flames and filled the hot pan with sliced ham. Hence loathed melancholy! The forest no longer seems wild when the coffee-pot begins to steam and bubble and the frying-pan to sizzle. We had a meal of fried ham, pilot biscuits, coffee and fruit-cake —this last a token of maternal best wishes; and if our spirits had drooped a bit while we were learning the true weight of packs in hot weather, we now began to recover a sort of intellectual buoyancy.

At most a pound had been transposed from our packs to our stomachs. But there was still enough weight left, with a blanket each, an oil-skin poncho, mess-kits, kettles, dry clothing, sweaters, and provisions of canned beans, rice, raisins, prunes, pancake flour, oatmeal, cocoa, coffee and pilot biscuits. For an hour or more we defied these bogies. We lay on our backs under the spruces beside the brook and blew puffs of tobacco-smoke into the air. And though our packs were not far away and silently admonished us for procrastinating, we insolently refilled our pipes more than once, while the talk flowed long and broad. There were two hours of physical exertion ahead of us—exertion such as no gentle-

man ever comes to know. But with the stream roaring close by and the sun dappling through the spruce-trees we were pleasantly oblivious of all that. And it was not long before we had agreed that life reduced to its lowest terms brought a wholesome satisfaction unknown to organized society. Agreement comes easily after dinner while the gourmands lie on their backs. How easy it is under favourable circumstances to reach brave conclusions about life, no matter how contrary the real facts may be! No sound business man forgets his cost of production and the closeness of competition when he talks with the directors through a haze of tobacco-smoke. Yet the man whose stomach is well filled can conjure the most glorious praises of life while his creditors are waiting just outside the door. After dinner, life dissolves her creditors or touches them with a magic wand which hurries them far away. But morning comes again, and the sorceries of dinner become once more artifices and pieces of play-acting. In business and in art the grey morn is disillusionment. But the surface philosopher of life knows no such disappointments. He may lose his temper in the morning; his spirits may sink quite low. But after dinner he will be once more contented and comfortable.

He will thank God for his good fortune, and will rejoice that he is not as others are.

Soon after two o'clock we packed up once more, and by many spurts, followed by generous rests on the spruce needles, we reached camp by four o'clock. Camp Penacook is an open-faced log shelter, facing a huge natural fire-place, and commanding a long view down the mountain and over the country to the south and east—fields, hills, villages, Ossipee Lake, Silver Lake, Knowles and Whitton Ponds, and to the west a near view of the precipitous summit of Chocorua which rises five hundred feet above. Twelve hours earlier we had been clumping through the moonlit streets of Boston.

* * *

*Pierre:* Your account does well enough, I suppose, and is no less indifferent to the facts than any piece of literature. But don't ever forget that we suffered on that stretch from Chocorua Brook to Camp Penacook. It was torture. It was inhuman; by God, it was hell, and you might as well admit it. But, of course, I understand; we would have no literature if we always had the facts.

*The Author:* My dear fellow, facts are never

more than fifty per cent of life. The rest are the things we don't understand and for which we go on living.

* * *

Our indolence and indulgence along the trail may have delayed our arrival, but at any rate we came into camp fresh. And as we examined this rough shelter, built and maintained by the Chocorua Mountain Club, our enthusiasm for the journey mounted. These mountain camps are too attractive in their combination of simplicity and sufficiency to be lived in for one night only. We set about distributing our stores along the slab shelves, laying out our blankets and ponchos and hanging up our towels and sweaters until Camp Penacook looked as though we were old inhabitants, or at least its owners. Behind the camp part way up the mountain was a dead spruce which had not yet fallen. We chopped it down, dragged it to camp, chopped it again into short lengths and split it into fire-wood. Long before we had finished supper and had washed the dishes, the sun went down behind the peak of Chocorua. Yet for a half-hour we could see it still shining in the valley, the outline of the mountain plotted there in a dark shadow, and

could see a knob of the southern ridge still warmed when the valley was almost sunless. We ran down through the woods to the spring, dark and tranquil under the trees, washed the dirt and wood-smoke from our hands and faces, and performed a make-shift toilet, adequate under the circumstances though not altogether refined. It was the end of our first day—a day begun in the midst of the city and concluded in natural solitude, the whole bound by an exhausting physical struggle. We pulled on our sweaters as the air grew cooler, lighted our pipes again and stretched out at full length on the ledge before camp to watch the coming of the night—withal contented as animals. It was all amazingly serene. A hermit-thrush, most reedlike of the White Mountain birds, sang again and again in a dark gully below. Mars came out red in the south-east. And as we smoked and dreamed, other stars appeared one by one. We counted seven, first beacons of the night. And fifteen minutes later we counted again; the total was fifty when we resigned the task as impossible. Lights now began to appear in the dark valley, at Clement Inn and at Madison, and three others burned steadily far off on the shore of Ossipee Lake. Once we heard a brush on a ledge below; it was

a brown rabbit leaping into a thicket. We were tired, but we were also contented and were loath to lose this scene in so useless a pastime as slumber. For a long time we gazed at the sky and at the dark peak above on the right where we hoped to be on the morrow. But at length the time did come for sleeping, and we undressed and wriggled into the sleeping-bags. Once during the night we were awakened by a stealthy noise too close by for composure. It was a porcupine, clumsy beast, investigating our store of provisions, some of which had not been put beyond his reach. We made noises ourselves no more civilized than his grunting, and he lumbered off in the moonlight. The other animals treated us with becoming respect; whatever they may have done they did discreetly. For even animals have civilized moments.

* * *

How the White Mountains came by that presumptuous and misleading name no one seems to know. In his "New England Rarities Discovered," published in 1672, John Josselyn gave them that designation, adding romantically that they were mountains "upon which lieth Snow all the year." If that were true, "White Moun-

tains" might be a truthful term, suggestive of glaciers, ice-capped peaks, broad expanses of snow, Arctic winds and cloud banners streaming from sharp summits. Of such glorious, sparkling quality is their beauty on sharp days in the winter. And ascents by snow-shoes and ice-creepers deserve well some frigid description. I once saw them in April from Monadnock, seventy-five miles south; "White Hills" they were then, too, great mounds of white looming on the horizon, Arctic enough in appearance, while the landscape around Monadnock was of that drab tone which just precedes the first delicate tinges of verdure. But the frequent assertion that the White Mountains bear that name because even in summer the summit rocks of the Presidential Range are white or whitish-grey, or appear so by reason of atmospheric conditions, is not strictly in accordance with the facts, and seems a beggarly way to justify a vain boast. Does not this summoning of evidence betray the braggart? It doth protest too much; if the name were fitting, these explanations would be superfluous.

No; "White Mountains" implies summits so lofty as to bear perpetual snows. The occasional snow-squalls which flurry over the summit of Mt. Washington in the summer scarcely come

within that category; and the snow-bank which lies in Tuckerman Ravine long after the June flowers have bloomed and faded vanishes as a rule before August is done. I confess that when I first visited these New Hampshire hills as a boy I was disappointed. Spurred on by the name "White Mountains," my imagination had sprung to ambitious conclusions which their height does not warrant.

We must not beat our breasts over the height of these mountains. What is the 6,000 feet of Mt. Washington to the 29,000 of Mt. Everest, the 20,000 of Mt. McKinley, the 15,000 of Mont Blanc, the 14,000 of the Matterhorn or Rainier? "Why, these are mere foot-hills!" exclaim tourists in New Hampshire to whom mountains mean the Rockies or Alps. Bless us! Of course they are foot-hills. Those who have stood on the summit of the Görnergrat above Zermatt and looked in awe at Monte Rosa, the Lyskamm, the sharp, defiant Matterhorn, the Weisshorn and other peaks far to the north, all sparkling with fresh-fallen snow, vast distances of white-capped, jagged peaks, snaky glaciers in every crevice, deep gorges, turbulent, foaming streams—whoever sees these peaks knows that *they* are the true "white" mountains.

We should do ourselves more credit and celebrate the beauties of our New England hills more effectively if we said less about their comprising "the Switzerland of America" and devoted our attention to their special characteristics—if, like Lord Bryce, we commended them for their friendliness, placidity and accessibility. To me also those are their chief virtues. The Alpine tourist responds to the sheer beauty of those lofty summits without always feeling the urge to stand on their highest rock. Most of those who do climb the Alps (unless they sneak their way to the top on funiculars) find it necessary to compromise their independence by engaging a guide who robs their pockets while he saps their resourcefulness. But the days are over when guides were necessary in the White Mountains, when Ethan Allen Crawford piloted adventurers through the woods to the summit ledges and finally up the cone of Mt. Washington. Now no one need fear going alone (except in uncertain weather), for the trails are broad, easy of grade and well marked. And so well mapped are these mountains that one has little to fear in rambling through the woods with no thought of trails. These are friendly mountains. One may *live* in them, while one is content to visit others,

to look at them and to return at night to a comfortable hotel. "White" mountains, mountains topped with perpetual snows, excite adventurous propensities. Our New England hills, on the contrary, are tranquil. And they soothe. One has nothing to fear from knowing them.

This may not have been true one hundred years and more ago. When Darby Field made the first recorded ascent of Mt. Washington in 1642 the native Indians did not dare accompany him to the summit, for there the Great Spirit lived and no mortal could with impunity invade that divine domain. A certain awe of the mountains, which was less than fear and more than respect, coloured the writings of those explorers and adventurers who pushed into that region in the early part of the nineteenth century. Until the first road was built through Crawford Notch in 1774, most of the mountains in that vicinity had rarely felt the pressure of the white man's foot; and the mystery of what these woods and peaks sheltered, unduly stimulated the imaginations of travellers who looked at them from a distance. Travel along the Notch turnpike, built in 1803, soon became frequent. In lumbering coaches visitors came from the south of New England, and indeed from all parts of the world,

spending the night in the old Crawford House, venturing up Mt. Washington, and in their diaries recording this climb which even now smacks pleasantly of novelty. The fatal disaster by avalanche at the Willey House in the summer of 1826 stirred the breasts of mountain travellers for many years. Scarcely a traveller through the Notch road but dwelt on that subject in private or public letters, on the mighty forces of the mountain which when liberated may take human life; and the story of that great storm even now appeals to certain instincts in human nature. I never pass through the Notch without re-creating that avalanche in the mind's eye. But as the seasons have rolled on and the mountains have become more familiar, it is likely that those who go through or over them are no longer apprehensive of their wildness. The White Mountains are now almost as inoffensive as a city park. That has obvious advantages. But what a thrill they must have brought to travellers from the city in pioneering days a hundred years ago!

Those days, alas! are gone. Not adventure but conventional recreation now draws most of the visitors to this region. In a measure the White Mountains have been subdued; the lion has been tamed, and his tail may now be twisted

with impunity. Railroads have made travel from town to town no more difficult than in the city; summer hotels with ball-rooms, golf-links and tennis-courts have softened and fattened life in the mountains; broad, graded paths have made climbing in the Presidentials no more difficult than Sunday afternoon climbing in the Palisades; the proud summit of Mt. Washington was first roped by a carriage and then thrown by a cog-railway, and defiled by the architectural excrescences which those who pander to summer tourists "run up" quickly; hard, oiled roads through the places of wildest beauty serve merely as speedways for neurotic automobilists whose first thought when they descend at night concerns their mileage. The mountains are now infested in places by those dull persons who spend the autumn "in town," the winter at Palm Beach and the summer recuperating on the summer-hotel porch. As unimaginative society has moved in, the expansiveness and freedom of the White Mountains has been squeezed and limited. Much still remains, however, for the pedestrian who is more enchanted by deep ravines and secluded waterfalls than by the appointments of his hotel and the variety of its cuisine. Boott Spur, Tuckerman Ravine, Great Gulf, Carrigain, White-

face, Passaconaway, Paugus—these have not been smirched by the egg-eating tourist. But the "childish fear" experienced by Thomas Cole when he first beheld the features of the Old Man in Franconia Notch in 1828, and the thrill which Francis Parkman felt when he visited the mountains in 1841—these are not often duplicated now.

Yet the independence and strength of the mountains is by no means dead. Some of those climbers who have set out above the tree-line of Mt. Washington in defiance of unfavourable elements have paid with their lives. A monument, a wooden cross stuck into a pile of rocks, a memorial tablet or two, serve as grim reminders of those tragedies. The scrub growth existing in rock crevices above the tree-line, torn, snapped and pounded by gales of fabulous strength, sometimes of more than 175 miles velocity, the summit rocks blackened, chipped year by year by occasional temperatures of 50° below zero, broken and cracked by frost, these bleak, barren, desolate, forbidding summits above the tree-line, these "unfinished parts of the globe," bear witness that the mountain still can snarl. In some measure, I, too, have tried the mettle of the mountain's temper. For once in August with a party of boys I was caught in a summer tempest at the Lake of

Clouds Hut at the base of the Mt. Washington cone. On the day before we had walked cautiously across the peaks from the Madison Spring Huts in opaque clouds which sometimes made objects a few feet away invisible, dampened the rocks until they dripped, and blew through our clothing until we were numb. During the night the wind came up; rain, hail and snow rattled against the heavy glass windows of the hut. All the next day the storm beat against the hut, whistling, roaring, shrieking, buffeting the door so that once open it could be shut again only with difficulty, stinging the faces and hands of those who ventured outside until they were glad to seek shelter again. After another night the storm somewhat abated and we ventured out, and at length walked into the shelter behind Mt. Pleasant, and down into the warm sunshine of the valley where the weather had been fine all the while. Those hardy fellows of fifty years ago who maintained a U.S. Weather Station on the summit of Mt. Washington all winter, while the icy blizzards rocked the little structure which sheltered them, blew the carpet off the floor, and kept the temperature below freezing three feet from the red-hot stove—they knew the stuff of the mountains. The tourists who on fine days

ignominiously climb Mt. Washington by the cog-railway can scarcely realize what diabolical strength lurks in this wilderness of mountains and valleys which on every side stretches placidly in the summer sunshine.

In the gratuitous task of taming the mountains the lumbermen have had far too large a share. Their sharp claws, scratching nearly every slope in that region, have torn away the flesh. Once when the first settlers were pushing their way north and in the day when Abel Crawford moved twelve miles south into the wilderness of Hart's Location ("rather than to be crowded by neighbours," as he said protestingly), white pine, hemlock and spruce flourished all through the White Mountains. In those extravagant days no settler's cabin was too humble for its white-pine frame and spruce finish. Pioneers chopped down the virgin trees and burned them in huge piles to clear the land. Lumber had little value in the commerce of the early White Mountain settlements. During the last century the state of New Hampshire sold its holdings ridiculously cheap, and most of the lumber companies have hacked their way into the forest ruthlessly. The real wilderness of the White Mountains, what is tritely known as "the forest primeval, the murmuring

pines and the hemlocks," has practically vanished. Far too few now are the lots where virgin spruce-trees rise a hundred feet in the air, branchless for half their length, straight, true and sound, in whose tops the wind blows all day like the wind which twists the weather vanes atop the church steeples. It is a rare delight to walk through such woods as still remain: woods where the undergrowth of birch, poplar and maple is almost absent, where the floor of the forest is soft and clean, and the sound of the wind majestic and sonorous—with no suspicion of the cacophonous babbling of the wind in hardwoods. One day such forests stretched through all the mountain vales; and he was indeed a vain man who could walk through them without paying spiritual tribute to their mysterious Maker.

Nearly all the virgin trees have come down indiscriminately—broad stretches of forest cleared to the highest reaches of the mountain where the stunted spruce-trees begin to grow, the land becoming in some places a weird, impassable criss-cross of twigs, branches and huge limbs, the ground exposed to the hot glare of the summer heat until its fertility expired. And the spruces, pines and hemlocks have not grown again, but have been supplanted by a quarrelsome growth

of hardwoods. In the autumn they shed their leaves, and now by daylight the winter mountains are mostly dull, lifeless in colour, the snow gleaming through a network of bare branches. The splendid green of the soft woods is confined to summits and high ridges whither the lumberman could not go.

Within the past few years the summer-hotel business has been almost transformed. Some few of the hotels where large numbers of guests spent several weeks in the summer stand like ghosts of a period that is past. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century the summer "travel" was at its height. Hotel-keepers erected long, rambling buildings to accommodate three hundred or five hundred guests, and had little vacant room during the height of the season. Then the mountain trains from Boston ran in two or three sections on holidays and week-ends, all filled, passengers standing in the aisles. And over the road lanky buckboards and mountain-wagons carried their freight of "summer boarders." The advent of the automobile has made the summer business one of "transients" and hurried tourists. Now the railroad trains are half-filled even in the busiest part of the season, many branch lines have been discontinued

and train service everywhere curtailed. The state-road hotels serve meals for automobilists and provide lodgings for a single night, while some of the hotels just off the through roads are closed, the paint is peeling from the buildings, and the long porches, once alive with guests all summer, are rotting away.

In view of the toll which various whims and passions of society have exacted from the White Mountains it is amazing to know how much beauty still remains for those who wish to see it. Backroads pedestrians may follow grass-grown ruts high up in the mountains to some abandoned farm-house. There the mountain towers abruptly on one side, and on the other the valley stretches for miles over hay-fields and wood-lots to other hills almost lost in the haze and quivering heat. On the Davis Path from Bemis to the summit of Mt. Washington, campers may climb steadily for nearly three days on the Montalban Ridge, camping at night in open-faced shelters, all the while in deep woods. There are streams which tumble from springs and pools well up under the mountain peaks; their little secrets of waterfall and gorge are kept for persons who scramble along the mossy banks or climb from boulder to boulder in the river bed. And no matter how unscrupu-

lously the lumber "kings" have ravished their domains, the contours of the mountains still remain—the smooth bow of Moosilauke, the sharp peak of Lafayette, the burly bulk of Carrigain, the jagged teeth of Tripyramid. And from every summit the variety of colours, rhythms, forms, cloud effects, green intervales, gleaming lakes, has resisted the inroads of man. It is said that no other range of mountains in the world, except the Alps, has been the subject of so much literature. Whittier, Hawthorne, Starr King, Lucy Larcom, Bolles, Torrey, Packard have written about them extensively; many others have written occasional verse or essays. Thoreau visited them more than once. New England has nothing else so beautiful to offer. Who can say how much good it has done to New Englanders, or how far the effect of its serenity and friendliness has travelled in an impatient world?

* * *

*Pierre:* There, now certainly you must be done with preamble! We are now on page 46. Surely, my friend, literature or no literature, it is time to begin the story.

*The Author:* Look here, old man, a little of this amateur criticism goes a long way. The

trouble with you is that you have no feeling for art, and you don't realize the importance of orienting the reader so that his mind meets yours directly. You can't stop a strange man on Fifth Avenue and begin: "We left Boston on Sunday morning at 6:30." He would simply think you were mad, and I for one could not contradict him. If you are going to write you must lead the reader on smoothly and gently, cajoling, urging, guiding and all that sort of business. In fact, you might say that the reader, being an inferior—

*Pierre:* Just so, just so. Let's begin right here.

* * *

An hour before we were up on Monday morning we lay in our blankets, heads bolstered up on the duffle-bags, watching the mist in the valley and the sun growing warm on the peak, and listening, too, for bird-voices. Day comes quietly in the mountains, with none of the initial bustle of the city. But there are virtues, withal, in this acceleration of the city day, for in a measure it prepares one for living. We squirmed out of our blankets towards seven o'clock to what at first sight was an inhospitable world. Where

now were the fires and steaming coffee-pots on which to begin the day? The world was no longer concerned with our presence; that came as a bit of a shock. But not long afterward the camp-fire was snapping, the oatmeal pot was rattling merrily, the coffee-pot was sending out a long banner of steam, and pancakes were smoking in the frying-pan. And so we recovered our poise and congratulated ourselves on a certain rare genius for adaptability and an underlying strength of character. There was no one near by to gainsay us.

Bird-songs were indifferent and sluggish with the advance of the summer. We listened in vain for the white-throated sparrow who a month earlier had been the most brilliant singer in the mountains. While breakfast was cooking, a purple finch faced the warm sun and sang as feelingly as though he, too, expanded with the breath of a mountain morning. And in the dark woods around the spring where we washed the sleep from our eyes and bodies, chickadees and kinglets made merry. Somewhere down the mountain a winter wren "uncorked his song" and ran on beautifully through trills and runs and warbles—an expression not of ecstasy but of deep and pleasant content.

After breakfast was cleared away we packed our duffle-bags carefully; and when that chore was done we set them outside the shelter where we could not see them—these ogres of camping life—and dawdled about camp, smoking and dreaming. Ah, but they were heavy packs! Pierre insisted that we ought never to be in a hurry, and if the burden of progress compromised the profit of our promenade—why, then, let us make no progress at all. Surely Camp Penacook was pleasant enough for a prolonged visit. There was virtue in what the man said.

From Camp Penacook the tip of Chocorua rises five or six hundred feet above a fringe of woods and a final temple of bald granite. We thumbed the map, and speculated on how far we might reasonably journey before nightfall. It looked easy enough on the contour-map. We might cross Paugus that day, with a little determination, and climb to the top of Passaconaway. Or Camp Shag on the crest of Paugus might prove far enough. It all depended on what good or bad fortune the day held in store. Well, we decided to take a fling at climbing, at least to the top of Chocorua; and at length we struggled under our packs. Great God of Russia, what a trail! In the woods we gasped and staggered, clutched at

the trees for assistance in climbing, and rested at frequent intervals. The serenity of morning in the mountains became now purely an academic point of view. Up above the tree-line, when the goal was ever in sight and each foot of progress shortened the distance perceptibly, we climbed more contentedly. But the morning was well gone before we stood on the top of the mountain and looked with satisfaction down over the height we had climbed.

The view was hazy. The rugged mass of Paugus, the pyramid of Passaconaway, even the long swell of Whiteface, were distinct enough, but the mountains to the far north were painted out of the picture. Carrigain and its graphic notch were barely visible and at times entirely obliterated. For sometimes at that precise point where the haze destroys visibility, a gentle breeze is enough to suggest faintly and then quite to blot out a distant line of mountains. We were not the first to climb Chocorua, despite the fact that we had slept so near the summit. Already a young woman had tubes of paint spread out on the summit and was painting this midsummer view, while her comrades sat round her listlessly. We discussed the view—conventionally, sentimentally and artistically. The painter remarked

that hazy weather in the mountains is after all the most beautiful, for it stimulates the imagination. It does. And how much more vividly a clear day enlivens the fancy! That sort of prismatic weather reveals a vast scenic wealth, and it also paints in mental images the fabulous wealth which lies just beyond the horizon and all through the universe, wealth to which human eyes are necessarily blind and human ears deaf. We are not endowed with natural beauty so parsimoniously that all that is visible on a clear day exhausts our coffers. Even though we travel through all the world on the wings of the wind, a lifetime is too short and human powers are too weak to respond to its infinite variety.

## II

IF the proposal to go on that day to Passaconaway had been entertained seriously, even at the moment when it was made, we soon forgot it as we loitered on the summit of Chocorua. The sun was hot; the air, lifeless. We spread out the map, counted the contour-lines which fell away from Chocorua to Swift River and then rose swiftly up Paugus, consumed our morning ration of chocolate, and talked with the others who had climbed the mountain. A party of climbers from the south advised us as to trails and expressed genuine interest in the project of our journey. The prospect of a week or two in the woods, dependent only upon an occasional store for replacing the stock of provisions, fires the imagination of those who like to climb. We fancied that these people envied us, even while they were unwilling to shoulder such heavy packs. You do not try the mettle of mountains from the porch of a hotel or boarding-house. No, you must take "pot luck" with the woods and the weather. From the cool

veranda and the comfortable hammock, mountains are deceptive hoydens. "He who knows what sweets and virtues are in the ground, the waters, the plants, the heavens, and how to come at these enchantments, is the rich and royal man."

Now, it was apparent to these sympathetic people that ours was a pleasure trip, and it was necessary for us to play our part accordingly. What is more ridiculous than a man who makes a chore of recreation? It was necessary, therefore, to put on a brave showing, at least as long as we were in sight. We shouldered the packs again, buoyantly as though they were nothing in particular, made our adieux hurriedly before the sweat began to run too profusely, and started down the peak carefully, making sure of each step, in the general direction of Paugus. The people on Chocorua summit watched us until a twist in the trail cut off the view. When we were certain of this we pocketed our pride and sat down under an overhanging ledge. The low, rambling summit of Paugus (3,248 feet) seemed almost contemptuously insignificant from the vantage-point of three hundred feet higher, but we regarded it with well-calculated respect. Our way lay down the western ledges of Chocorua, through a burned patch of forest on the "Bee-

Line" Path. The sun blazed hotter every minute, and the air was far from invigorating. And the task of descending carefully, making due allowance for the pushing force of the packs, and trying each footstep before entrusting ourselves to it—all this was a nervous as well as physical strain. We rested without shame; we wasted time imprudently. We lingered over a tiny stream of water which was the one cool spot in this dry, dusty, burned area. It was nearly two o'clock before we reached Swift River for a legitimate pause in the day's journey.

Swift River is a broad mountain stream rushing through a stony path between Chocorua and Paugus. We found a deep, oval pool in it near the junction of the "Bee-Line" Path with the Bolles Trail, the trees leaning over it on every side. In a few minutes we had a fire of driftwood snapping at the edge, the coffee-pot swinging close to the flames; and while the water was heating we undressed and plunged into the river. Mountains have no surer tonic than these cold streams which gather their water from the summits and carry it through the shade of ever-green forests. But no one bathes in such water; plunge and retreat—that is the formula. And so we plunged, soaped ourselves thoroughly, and then

plunged again until we felt clean and refreshed. We hung our sweaty clothing in the sun, and in the garb of tropical savages we cooked our luncheon and ate it. It was cool and comfortable sitting on the rocks, sung to by a noisy stream whose voice, heard in such close proximity, is never dull—a succession of mezzo-soprano notes against a background of wood-wind instruments, a perpetual "Unfinished Symphony." It was there, as the hands of the watch passed three o'clock, that we officially abandoned Passaconaway as a goal beyond the bounds of pleasure promenaders. Paugus rose at our backs, a grim reminder of hard work still to be done before nightfall.

* * *

In these woods and mountains we were not concerned with details; on the contrary we were concerned with masses and generalities—with the peaks of the mountains rather than with the innumerable twists of the paths up which we scrambled, with the sweep of the woods rather than with the individual trees, with ranges of hills, horizons, shadows, clouds, the flood of sunshine.

And that was in a way the contrast between

life in the mountains and life in the city. Whatever refreshment we enjoyed sprang from this sudden freedom from the tyranny of details and that exhausting confusion of innumerable petty affairs which puts a high premium upon city living. An Olympian might live serenely in the city and see nothing but a black mass of people in the streets and a long jumble of high buildings, some soaring above the others, as the aeronaut looks down upon Manhattan from an altitude of 2,000 feet. What he sees, however, and what develops in the photographs he snaps, is not the city—but the shell of the city. The city is the people, the procession of individuals busy about their individual affairs, the people on the streets, all through the office buildings; in the tenements, apartments and dwellings; in theatres and concert-halls and galleries—the people everywhere who have made the physical city and for whom the physical city exists. One knows nothing of the city and misses its fascination who knows nothing of who these people are and how they live—in sum, who knows nothing of the details. The details exhaust those most intimately concerned, but they are nevertheless the city's life-blood.

The total effect of these details may be pitiably insignificant, in comparison with a single mountain

range, for instance; but to most of us it is never uninteresting. These fragments of universal life may not differ in any one year or century and may tell more of the meanness of our civilized life than of its sublimity; but none of us is really bored on that account. When we are bored we are merely surfeited. Day by day the newspapers go through the lists of news staples—international turmoils, wars, insurrections, government conferences and investigations, senatorial speeches, reports of commissions, religious wrangles, divorces, murders, scandals, raids, floods, droughts, plagues, famines, fires, accidents, all gathered from the far corners of the world, with a speculative note now and then thrown in about other planets in the solar system. Day by day the columns are bursting with this sort of thing. It is only the unimaginative, however, who turn over the pages with a weary gesture and remark, "There's no news to-day." We suffer not from an excess of news but from a lack of it—from the impossibility of recording all human events, all the details iridescent with humanity. News sources are innumerable, the news organization prodigious. It is still quite inadequate to sweep up all that happens day by day. In a modest way we know something of our

own planet and will learn more year by year. What of the others? What of those we can see; what of those we cannot see?

"I knew a man who failing as a farmer
Burned down his farm-house for the fire-insurance,
And spent the proceeds on a telescope
To satisfy a lifelong curiosity
About our place among the infinities,
And how was that for other-worldliness?"

Robert Frost knows much of "other-worldliness."

Most of us city-dwellers lead fairly active lives and come directly in contact with many people, indirectly with many more. The details of this small traffic would overwhelm us if most of them did not automatically fall into certain categories where they look out for themselves. But we have only to stray a bit outside the routine of our existences, walk to the office by a different route, go to a new restaurant for dinner, venture into an unfamiliar corner of the city, or meet a new man in another business or another social circle, to learn not only how little we know of this human life close by, but also how feeble our understanding is of that which passes immediately under our eyes. No use crying in despair that we can

never know a millionth part of this one city. The point is, we are not alert.

"Beyond Hyde Park," Sir Fopling Flutter frippered, "all is desert." An eighteenth-century notion, of course. Even in the twentieth, however walking in the city is not to be despised. This long stretch of Manhattan (where I am living now), crowded with people and soaring with buildings and minarets, its "glimmering spires and lighted bastions, dreamlike as the castles and cathedrals of a romantic vision"—this is no mean promenade and may carry one round the world within the compass of a few miles. From the Battery to the Park—what may one not see of the world here? And if one puts in an entire day and goes poking about the docks as well, through both tenement and business districts; and if one peers into every shop-window on one side of Fifth Avenue, or, if that be too arduous, then into every second window, perhaps one may learn something new. Manhattan is a microcosm of peculiar beauty, with its noises, colours, vistas, far-flung buildings, the pageantry of crowds, and stories written on strange faces, the sunlight and the shadows, the river "maculated with craft," as Huneker phrased it, such stuff as Balzac saw

in Paris, Dickens in London, and Juvenal in ancient Rome. Yet if this opulence offends the delicate eye and seems merely tawdry, one can always relieve it by gazing at the sky, at the same sky which enfolds the country. Especially if one walks at evening by the river, agleam with the myriad-lighted ferry-boats and tugs, they stir the imagination. Sometimes on crisp winter evenings I see the Great Dipper flickering above the buildings at the south end of Washington Square. For the city boasts its own magic and necromancy, especially in the evening, with the glow of window-lights, street-lights and heaven-lights all blending, all related parts of the universe.

Now and then I like to be alone in the city and to walk with the tide of traffic. Especially on Saturday afternoons in the springtime, Fifth Avenue streams with holiday promenaders—a stream dammed at times at cross-streets until the corners are choked and running over; then released by the traffic signals it is swallowed up in the main current which flows the full length of the Avenue. These are smart people, for the most part, smartly dressed, walking with an air of composure. And they *are* composed, too, at least amid this company, even the vast majority of them who privately struggle for a living and

blunder through the succession of private disasters which punctuates human lives. Here at least all reflect the splendour of this one avenue where the riches of the world are gathered and arrayed enticingly in shop-windows. It is an amiable throng, privately oppressed, paying tribute every hour to the growing complexity of civilized life; but it is in no mood for revolution. Changes in economic life are reflected here as quickly as the changes in modes and manners; but the changes well up from other springs. This is a throng decidedly contented, minding its own affairs as no other throng in the country, but with mutual neighbourly interest nevertheless. This is the most tolerant mart in America. For here the thirty-dollar clerk rubs elbows with the millionaire and thinks nothing in particular about it. Even in Washington Square where foreigners quite outnumber the native Americans, and the children of foreign parents roller-skate and "stump the leader" so energetically that walking becomes a peril—even here, a stone's throw from squalid tenements and exotic tearooms and intellectual garrets, one looks in vain for an anarchist. Anarchism—social, literary or artistic—may simmer and seethe in the neighbourhood garrets or among the serious thinkers of the near-by clubs, but not

in the Square on springtime afternoons or evenings. Those who are walking there or lounging on the hard benches may have mordant thoughts about the social system, but they are too languid, too content as animals to bother about serious matters.

But the city is not all detail and gregariousness. Even in the midst of the maelstrom a secluded nook or two provide shelter. Indeed, sometimes I fancy that the solitude we make for ourselves in the very centre of the city is the more enchanting because it is deliberate; whilst the solitude of the woods cannot be remedied. At any rate, I like to push through the Saturday afternoon crowds on Fifth Avenue, past the snobbish lions sniffing the air before the Public Library, past the fashionable shops, past the Waldorf-Astoria with self-conscious luncheon parties at the windows, past the silk-stores with iridescent, blazing strips of fine stuff in the windows betokening a softer, richer civilization than ours—past all this and then a few steps along a side-street and up four flights in a musty apartment-house to the rear lodgings where I live. This house is doubtless the least desirable in the street, somewhat decayed, lost amid higher and cleaner buildings, badly ventilated, dark in the hallways, and in-

habited by a fly-by-night sort of company into whose business one dare not inquire too earnestly. A commercial artist of pleasant manner and real aspirations lives on the same floor. I know none of the others, not even the couple who live in the next rooms, whom I hear coming and going, but whom I have never seen. The others pursue their own affairs in their own unobtrusive way, and by their attitude suggest that the less known the better. And if they seem suspicious of their neighbours it is well, for I at least am mightily suspicious of them. How else may one account for the packages which strange men carry out, but never in; for the boxes furtively brought in from rather shabby automobiles; for the slippery-mouthed man lurking about the door or gazing from a window at almost any hour of the day; for the heap of drunken humanity on which I accidentally stepped one evening on the dark steps; and for the weary lady who advertises herself on the bell directory as a—well, one must not tell it all; one must not write out a police record for one's own house. That comes too close to treason.

There are seven windows in my apartment, all with human prospects. One faces a neighbouring apartment inhabited by a kindly, white-haired

woman whom I see reading the newspaper every morning. We are separated by two walls and a space of ten feet, but we have never spoken or nodded or shown the slightest neighbourly feeling. The other windows look upon dingier subjects—one a badly-lighted loft where two Jewish girls, with pasty complexions, labour from 8:30 until 5. They rarely look up from their tasks. From other windows I see a laundry, awhirl with machinery and with human workers who keep pace with the mangles as though there were no sun and sky outside to lure them out of the turmoil. They do not put up the shutters until six o'clock; theirs is a long exhausting workday in heat and confusion, cleaning other people's dirty linen. From another window I look out on a rear alley, a jumble of grimy brick walls, ugly fire-escapes, electric wires; but above the western wall looms the top of a Fifth Avenue building where I can see the sun in the morning before it has passed over the brick summits above my apartment.

This tumultuous corner of the city, dingy from soft-coal smoke and acrid with the sweat of human toil, is far, far indeed from the austere Lamb Court where Arthur Pendennis and George Warrington drank pints of porter, burned vile

cheroots, looked through books for review and read proofs brought by the printer's boy. Here are none of the stately dignities of gentlemen of the Old World, none of the fragrant formalities of living, none of the goings and comings of seedy scholars with hollow eyes or gay young wastrels with flaming cheeks. On the contrary, here are worked out the destinies of a hundred laundresses, seamstresses, tailors and dealers in silks, who may frolic a bit after six o'clock if they are not too weary from nine hours of labour, but who have little to amuse them during the day. This is no place for spacious living. For spacious living is not a product of machine civilization and self-imposed materialism.

But in such places as this we create solitude in the city and free ourselves of details as thoroughly as by going to the woods. The rumble of traffic never ceases, even during the night; in foggy weather the tug-boats screech mysteriously in the North and East Rivers; fire-apparatus screams down Madison and Fifth Avenues several times a day, a weird, uncanny, shrill, terrifying rush and tumble, a true urban fanfaronade. Thus the pulse of the city is always throbbing on our ears. There is solitude here nevertheless, as refreshing as that of the woods; and a solitude quite free of

loneliness. In places so constantly concerned with the means of living it is well to reserve corners for contemplating the ends—even though they be no more tangible than fays and sprites. For perhaps, like Jean Paul, we who dream amid our own books and papers, pried upon by nothing more animate than the wall-clock, may wake and find that nothing has gone but our sleep. Our daytime occupations after all are no more progressive than a sort of martial "beating time," keeping the machinery oiled and fed so that time may not be lost. We cannot look beyond the farthest whirling gears. For more distant and opalescent prospects we must cultivate places for solitude and loneliness.

* * *

Those who climb Paugus, less euphoniously known as Old Shag or Toadback, are by no means numerous or altogether wise. The lowest of the Sandwich Range, with no single peak commanding a broad view, it is also one of the most difficult to ascend. For everywhere the slopes are steep, and they culminate in a succession of cliffs which are inaccessible save in a few places. And since the lumberman has carried away the huge trees on the south and east slopes, a quarrel-

some growth of maple and birch makes the woods fairly uninteresting. A stubborn mountain, reluctant to be conquered, it kept us scrambling, puffing and sweating until half past six. Soon after we were fairly started on our climb a hermit thrush flew into the thicket. I "squeaked." He came nearer through the leafy second growth cautiously, by short advances alternated with anxious moments of peering under the leaves, until he was nearly over our heads. Only when birds are so near that their markings can be seen with the naked eye do they seem clean and precise of pattern. This quality of their plumage does not appear in stuffed specimens in glass cases, "museum-coloured." Indeed, birds lose so much of their individuality in death, their attitudes and personal characteristics are so significant, that stuffed specimens are not always immediately recognizable. Near the last ridge of the cliffs we saw a young junco, but lately from the nest, his white tail-feathers exposed like starched skirts. He did not closely resemble his sleek parents, had none of their smooth slate-grey, and if he had not chirped quite in the voice of his parents we should scarcely have known him.

But we were neither bored nor exhausted as we climbed Paugus this stifling afternoon. On the

contrary, we conserved our strength, and lest the periods of conservation be set down as blank spaces in our lives, as vacuums (which *human* nature does not necessarily abhor), we laughed and joked, discussed and speculated, "tossed and gored," all in the boisterous, resonant voices for which the woods are well suited. And to lend a touch of regularity to these volatile moments we adopted a system of "official" and "semi-official" rests. The body governed both number and length of semi-official rests. When our legs ached, our breath came in short gasps, and our hearts throbbed almost noisily, semi-official rests alone made further progress possible. And although he who was in the rear sometimes complained of the length of a spurt up the mountain, neither complained of the number of these brief pauses. Far less gross and by the same sign far more ethereal were the official rests. The soul governed them and the spirit indeed flourished upon them. For they came to be rests of twenty or thirty minutes when we took off our packs, sprawled on our backs, lighted our pipes, drank at a spring when that was possible, and talked at large about the world. How many tremendous thoughts are lost because no reporter is present? How many scintillant jests for the

same reason waste their fragrance on the desert air? How many bold ideas, apophthegms, even plots for novels and lines of fragile verse have you lost for ever, dear reader, because they flew through your mind just before you fell asleep? Such thoughts came in bewildering abundance at every official rest. They rustled for an instant in the spruce-trees. The birds heard them, and, astonished at their profundity, took flight and were seen no more.

It was after six when we climbed the last steep place in the trail, surmounted the last cliff, and came to the easier, rocky grade where the trail twists over the ledges three-quarters of a mile to camp. A sense of luxury at being so near the end of the day's march made the last stretch a long one. We were for ever resting, indulging ourselves, and we took a sudden interest in the history of the trees which grew in this difficult exposure. Their entire competence for this life seemed a reflection upon human beings who struggled under them. It had been a wearisome day, a sore trial on unaccustomed muscles, but a sense of expectancy now kept us going. The trail wound through the trees mysteriously; each turn in it promised to be the last. And finally we came to Camp Shag, built in a sort of summit plateau,

a deep spring a few steps behind it. Before supper was finished the night had fallen black under these tall spruces, many of which were a foot thick through the butt. We washed our kettles by candle-light and dried our sweaty clothing before the fire while we sat comfortably with our backs against a tree. Through the black branches the stars flickered silently. And although we were tired we still put off as long as possible the business of drowning the quiet majesty of night in sleep. Every moment was really too precious. There may have been porcupines near us that night, or even bears in that mountain fastness, but we slept too soundly to hear them. And the sun was well above the horizon before we were astir the next morning.

* * *

*Pierre:* Well, I see that, after all, literature has its limitations. What interests me most about your piece is what you leave out rather than what you put in.

*The Author:* Art, my friend, is selection.

*Pierre:* Life, old inkpot, is one damned thing after another. Literature is too blamed snobbish to admit that. Now, what you don't get in your precious scribbling here is the sense of physical

exhilaration in this day's climbing. You curse out the packs and call on the reader to shed tears over our hardships and paint us as martyrs of a sort, which is all good literature in good literary taste and tradition. But while we were scrambling breathlessly up Paugus there was also a physical exultation, a close contact of physical body against physical obstacle, every muscle pulling hard—a contest from which we emerged as the victors. I suppose that is too vulgar for literature. Art goes on the theory that arms and legs are to be looked at but never used. Well, it is not even quite safe to ogle them. All I can say is I'm glad you weren't translating your thoughts into art that Monday afternoon on Paugus. Otherwise I should never have managed to pull you up to the top of Paugus as easily as I did. Go on, now; let's become literary again and get over the ground as quickly as possible.

* * *

There was real work to be done on Tuesday, through some of the wildest and most refreshing country in the White Mountains; and we were eager to get under way. More scientific mountaineers than we might have approached the work

more wisely, however, and might easily have got under way a full two hours before we did. But what's to be gained, save an hour or two in the evening; and why should men carry into the mountains the efficiency they devote to city business? Well, we never did that in the mountains, except once when the circumstances compelled it. We lingered over breakfast, packed the duffles leisurely; and when everything was in readiness for the march we made a peace offering to the gods, smoked one pipe all through without hurrying, and let the essence of Nature, the essence of the trees and sunshine and the birds and the far sweep of sky, seep through our consciousness before we got under way.

* * *

*Pierre:* Oh, my God! What in heaven's name is all this about?

*The Author:* My friend, it is about the innermost reaches of the human soul.

* * *

From the summit of Paugus, where at nine o'clock the sun was pouring down pitilessly, we looked at the black spruce-clad tip of Passaconaway and at the rugged country which lies be-

tween—the steep western slopes of Paugus, a maze of forest and granite cliffs, the ungainly hump of Hedgehog and an unnamed mound which rises towards Passaconaway. It was not difficult to remember that once the red-skins hunted in such forests, and under the successive rules of Passaconaway and Wonalancet waged war against other tribes and the invading white man. By ten o'clock we were descending Paugus on the Lawrence Trail, over ridges bristling with stunted trees, down steep gravel banks formed by the crumble of the ledges where the granite rocks have been split by the frost and washed by the rain. Down we went steeply and then along the side of high, wooded cliffs, taking each footstep cautiously lest the weight of our packs upset us and send us tumbling in the forest below. We crossed the face of the monstrous Overhang where the view up and down a serrated ridge is equally stupendous. If we had scant footing as we pushed through this country, the trees had hardly more. For every inch of girth and altitude they had worked untiringly. They grew from crevices in the cliffs and between heavy boulders which they had gradually thrust aside. And their roots, enjoying the ease of no rich depth of soil, ran all over the mountainside, interweaving and inter-

twining, until the floor of the forest had become a bewildering tangle. Whence comes their nourishment? They must be sturdy trees to flourish in such country, like the first settlers who cleared the fields on the mountains a century and more ago.

We decided to climb Passaconaway by the Walden Trail which ascends the steep slope of Hedgehog and then dives and leaps over another ridge to the cone of the mountain. The guidebook made no mention of water on that side of the mountain. In weather which kept so much water on the exterior of our bodies we had no desire to parch the interior, for neither nature nor the human disposition thrives on such an inequality. Below the Overhang we came to a spring bubbling joyously at the base of two huge maple-trees. Pierre cried: "Official rest!"—dropped his pack and dipped his face into the spring, while I was close on his heels. Having filled our cups more than once we sat down with a tree as luxurious back-rest to enjoy the sublimity of a hard-growth forest and to console ourselves for the work ahead by congratulating ourselves on the work behind. The woods were songless and silent, except for a vague whirring like the machinery of a distant sawmill or of a distant

automobile engine. As we consumed our ration of chocolate, sipped the cool water and smoked our pipes, the sound came several times. It was a partridge drumming near some fallen log a few rods off in the forest.

Fearing drought for the rest of the day, Pierre filled his canteen as we left the spring, and it was fortunate that he did. For the woods through which we climbed all afternoon, well up towards the tip of Passaconaway, were hot and waterless. At noon we were in the wild valley between Paugus and Passaconaway, where we began the arduous ascent of Mt. Hedgehog. Why this hump is so contemptuously named (especially since another mountain five miles north bears the same name), we did not know. But surely the posterior of the ubiquitous hedgehog, when his quills lie pointing to the rear, is no more angular and is no more forbidding when seen from behind. We climbed the back by brief, determined marches which left us breathless and sweaty, but always nearer the top, and then we walked across the top of the ridge in search of water. Alas! there was none—not even the Ancient Mariner's teasing plenty. It was nearly two o'clock when we abandoned the quest and prepared our luncheon of baked beans over a fire built on a rock in the

midst of the woods. But the beans, nutritious as the label ungrammatically proclaimed, did not quench our thirst, or stimulate our enjoyment of this bit of old forest. We laid hands on the canteen, pressed its damp covering against our cheeks and cooled our parched throats with frugal gulps. The dishes and frying-pan were soiled, but water was too precious for so vulgar a use as washing. We cleaned them quite as effectively with branches of leaves. It is said that raspberry-leaves clean dishes as thoroughly as soap and water; only a middle-class prejudice kept us from resorting to that method throughout the entire journey.

* * *

*Pierre:* Why do intelligent men climb mountains?

*The Author:* I doubt whether intelligent men do.

*Pierre:* Yet surely you would not dissent if by some strange chance you were described as intelligent.

*The Author:* No, indeed. I should consider that description conservative.

*Pierre:* Do we climb mountains because they

symbolize life—because the grade is always up and they fret the way with minor details?

*The Author:* Nonsense, old fellow! Life is not like that. I defy you to prove that it is constantly mounting higher, or that its obstacles are minor. If life were as arduous as the rump of Passaconaway we should all remain indolently in the valley. No: life pays best in proportion to your content and lack of personal ambition, your unwillingness to rush on to the summit. Really, old fellow, how naïve you are!

*Pierre:* Naïve, am I? Well, at any rate I don't talk merely for effect, for vain show, and especially in company I'm not likely to impress. But to return to our muttons, mountain-climbing is something in the nature of an achievement. That's what attracts the climbing throng. Otherwise they would be quite as content to walk through level woods.

*The Author:* That is largely true. And we also climb mountains because they carry us into a new world. Thoreau said somewhere in his Ktaadn essay that mountain tops are untamed parts of the universe whither it is a slight insult to the gods to climb and pry into their secrets and try their effects on our humanity. No patch

of level woods has the wealth of exotic impressions which you may get on mountain summits where the wind blows as it never blows on level ground, and where the trees fight for existence as they never fight down below, and where the birds and flowers and nearly everything else have individual qualities.

*Pierre:* Hold tight, old boy! Don't get breathless over words. There is plenty of climbing still ahead.

* * *

We slipped the mess-kits into the packs again and started on towards Passaconaway. We descended sharply in a ravine between two clumsy humps and so lost much of the altitude we had won at the cost of throbbing hearts. Then up again, hands, knees and feet, grasping at convenient trees for support, pulling up one almost precipitous rise where our stomachs were close against the cliff and our feet were none too secure. And then over a minor summit where the trail vanished in a tangle of blow-downs, and from which the cone of Passaconaway loomed up pleasantly near at hand. As if inspired by a diabolical will to dampen our spirits, the trail now deserted the logical route across a level col and slipped far

down the eastern slope, setting us the gratuitous task of regaining this altitude by a steep and sandy gully. We might curse and threaten, but we were as helpless as middle-class society; and as Pierre remarked, you must climb mountains on your feet, and all your piety and wit cannot cancel half a yard. When we were half-way up the gully we did mock the devil temporarily by declaring an official rest and plucking raspberries which had ripened in the sun. But the mountain summit above us did not shrink while we loitered. Despite the disappointments, the thirst and discouraging nature of the climb, however, the most difficult part of our day was over. At the head of the gully a trail pointed directly towards the setting sun. We followed it on the precipitous mountain side, through woods where tough bunches of roots were as intertwined as the Laocoön, to a spring of ice-cold water singing to itself in the wilderness. And a half-hour later we climbed to the camp, at an elevation of 3,600 feet.

We had seen no one since leaving Chocorua on Monday noon. But now as we approached camp we found it already occupied by two lads who were cooking the last of their supper. Their greeting was as cordial as though we were old

acquaintances. They had been at work for the past month on the trails leading up Paugus, Passaconaway and Whiteface, and had improved all the paths save the Walden Path over which we had come that afternoon.

We set about splitting wood at once; and as night crept down over the mountain and the only light came from the dancing flames, we finished supper and laid out our beds. Then all four sat down close to the fire and compared notes—not merely of the woods, but of those larger subjects of life with which all mortals concern themselves. Such meetings are explorations, intellectual adventures, in search of common ground. And what joy it is to discover behind strange features and strange voices the old landmarks of comradeship. It was not merely that these new friends liked to sleep and cook in the open and loved the trees and mountains where they worked all day. Beyond all this they, too, were concerned with life, were eager to know what was false and what true, were on the watch for beauty and kept the windows of their look-outs clean lest something of value escape them. They had their fields for observation, as we had ours, for no man can watch the entire landscape. But for all that the principles are constant, and it is rare to find two

whose fields have not overlapped. And so by the time our fire-wood was gone and the flames had become spasmodic, we all knew roughly what property we had in common and what each held in his own right. It is the virtue of intellectual property that all may profit by what one holds alone, and no matter what demands are made upon it the owner is none the poorer.

In three days we had accomplished what moderately vigorous walkers might do in two. We made our ambulatory renegation one hundred per cent instead of fifty by declaring Wednesday a prolonged official rest. We were none of your scientific men who weigh their packs carefully, plan their schedule and hang to it day in and day out. Our packs, albeit heavy, were sufficiently well-provided with food to sustain us three or four days longer. So we made a superholiday of this fourth day in a fortnight of holidays; on the fourth day we rested from all our works and kept it holy.

Those who are hunting birds destroy their chances of seeing many when they hang to a fixed schedule. Birds warm to idlers better than to the important people who bustle along the road and trail with a preoccupied expression on their faces. We had a substantial breakfast that morning,

what with oatmeal, griddle-cakes, bacon, crackers fried in the fat, and coffee. But the birds singing in the tree tops, swinging in the sunshine, and calling to one another in clear tones drew us away from our meal more than once. Most of them were birds with which we were familiar, either by plumage or song. The chickadees, kinglets, juncos, blackpoll warblers and Canadian nuthatches we knew, without being any the less interested in them. But the others, whose volatile songs rang out in clear tones, brought us to the opera glasses and at times led us a quiet chase around camp. They were purple finches and American crossbills, common enough to mountain tops in New England; but the crossbills particularly, who made nothing of flying close over our heads, were to us something in the nature of a novelty. So keyed up were we to the chances of seeing rare birds that when a hairy woodpecker started drumming fifty feet up on a dead tree we were determined to make him out one of the less common three-toed woodpeckers. Fortunately he remained some time in one place, leisurely spreading out one wing and then the other, giving us ample opportunity to identify him by the book. Being in search of the truth, no matter at what cost to human vanity, we abandoned the quest for

three-toed woodpeckers. In amateur ornithology the will to believe ranks high. When birds are so numerous and elusive as they are in New England, and can be identified positively only by tiny markings, the ambitious amateur with more enthusiasm than judgment has no difficulty in compiling impressive lists of rare birds seen in the most unlikely places. For although he is not sure that he has seen a Bohemian waxwing, neither is he sure that he has not. When the amateur returns with less remarkable bird lists, his honour as well as his knowledge of birds has improved. In human affairs the will to believe makes for little good. Especially in the newspapers it endows the commonplace with the brilliance and glitter of the unusual. How many times have we hailed mountebanks as prophets, demagogues as deliverers! How easily we confuse the world as it is with the world as we wish it were! And how much pressure we put upon authors to paint this happy world of our dreams! Chekhov wrote in a personal letter to Madame M. V. Kiselyov: "That the world swarms with 'dregs and scum' is perfectly true. Human nature is imperfect, and it would be strange therefore to see none but righteous ones on earth. But to think that the duty of literature is to unearth the pearl from the

refuse heap means to reject literature itself. 'Artistic' literature is only 'art' in so far as it paints life as it really is. Its vocation is to be absolutely true and honest. To narrow down its function to the particular task of finding 'pearls' is as deadly for it as it would be to make Levitan draw a tree without including the dirty bark and the yellow leaves. I agree that 'pearls' are a good thing, but then a writer is not a confectioner, not a provider of cosmetics, not an entertainer; he is a man bound, under contract, by his sense of duty and his conscience; having put his hand to the plough he mustn't turn back, and however distasteful, he must conquer his squeamishness and soil his imagination with the dirt of life."

As the morning advanced and we considered our various businesses and household duties for the day, it was evident that we had no time to waste. We had clothes to wash, fire-wood to chop, a dish of prunes to stew, a book to dip into, an afternoon's walk to Whiteface; whilst I was charged with the responsibility of keeping a vigilant eye on the birds, and Pierre made hourly observations of the sun with the compass; and both of us had myriad, confining responsibilities towards the clouds, the haze, the wind and the views. But lest noon be on us before we had com-

menced the round of duties we descended at once to the spring rippling through the moss and needles a few feet below camp. Here we washed ourselves and then washed our soiled clothing. Like Roman slaves, the birds immodestly pursued us to the baths. We hung our wet clothes on a line in the sun (where they made a tranquil, homelike appearance) and put on the dry ones we had brought in our packs. It was already late for stewing prunes.

Amid the kettles and provisions in our packs we had a book—to supply the wisdom of a third party if perchance our own should rub bare. And lest the imported wisdom should prove inferior to the native (for which we had unconscionable respect), we had chosen our book most deliberately. We had once cast designing eyes on Montaigne. In the woods there would be rare companionship in a man who wrote such isolated nuggets as these: "I have ever loved to repose myself, whether sitting or lying, with my heels as high or higher than my seat." "I have never put myself to great pains to curb the desires by which I have found myself beset. My virtue is a virtue, or rather an innocence, which is purely random and accidental." "The generality of more solid sort of men look upon abundance of children as a great bless-

ing; I and some others think it a great benefit to be without them."

But at last our choice fell on the discourses of Socrates by Xenophon and Plato, in one of those translations happily prepared against charlatans who cannot read the original. A happy choice! While lunch was cooking we read aloud Socrates' "Apology," before the verdict, after the verdict and before the sentence, and after the sentence of death. It went as well as, nay, better, in a rough log shelter near the summit of Passaconaway, than in the heavily charged atmosphere of Academe. For up there we were less concerned with the reasoning than with the man whose trial of his own case rippled with sardonic gibes and dry humours even while his life was at stake. We laughed at the points over which Socrates no doubt chuckled to himself; but I think we were both moved when after the verdict he turned to his friends in the assembly and said calmly: "There is no reason why we should not talk together while we can, and tell each other our dreams. . . . When I left home in the morning, the signal of God was not against me, nor when I came up here into the court, nor in my speech, whatever I was about to say; and yet at other

times it has often stopped me in the very middle of what I was saying; but never once in this matter has it opposed me in any word or deed. What do I suppose to be the reason? I will tell you. This that has befallen me is surely good, and it cannot possibly be that we are right in our opinion, those of us who hold that death is an evil. A great proof of this has come to me; it cannot but be that the well-known signal would have stopped me, unless what I was going to meet was good."

* * *

*The Author:* By Jove, he was a *man!*

*Pierre:* Truly he was. Of course, his argument in defence of himself could hardly have pleased the court and put it into a sober mood of impartiality. The defendant owes some duty towards the jury. If they are to return a just verdict he must not call up their personal prejudices by deliberately antagonizing them.

*The Author:* Yes, that is true. And it also shows Socrates to have been a most virtuous man, or he could not have been so indifferent to his fate. When it comes to a matter of life and death most of us are too distracted for dreaming.

* * *

It was delightful to be in camp (quite as delightful as being on the march), to be fixed, with the fire burning all day, the clothes swinging on the line, the lodge furnished with our belongings, with our provisions in one corner, our blankets airing in the sun, our two books within arm-reach (the bird book and the fountain of wisdom), the map to tell stories of unknown country, the compass to fix our place in the world and our relation to it. For all things are relative, and for sentimental humans the mountains boast half their charm by contrast; and our enjoyment of the woods was largely that we had brought our home into them. We sat in the doorway, languid in the sunlight, occasionally getting up to mend the fire and to watch the progress of the stewing prunes. That was business enough—keeping the heat constant, moving the kettle to one side when the liquid boiled too furiously, pouring in fresh water, laying on a new stick of wood, kicking the embers into a glowing heap. It was truly life in close contact with the essential elements which compose it.

Whiteface summit lies two miles to the west by a path on the edge of a mountain bowl. It

was three o'clock before our duties were done, and by that time thunder was rolling ominously in the north-west. We put everything under cover, including a supply of fire-wood, and then started swiftly on our way, hoping to reach Whiteface before the storm broke. To the left of the trail was the precipitous cirque between Whiteface and Passaconaway, so deep that the bottom was faint in the haze. We were only half-way to Whiteface when rain began to spatter. The centre of the storm was to the east, but the edge of it moved overhead, black with clouds, scud and rain, and booming with long rolls of thunder. The beauty of the storm was magnificent. In the north the sun disputed with the clouds, setting gold off against the black. In the south the Ossipee Mountains were a study in blues as the storm swept over them—deep blue to the east, on Shaw and Blacksnout, turning gradually to blackish blue on the west where rain was falling and the clouds were heavy. Eager to see the entire panorama, we set out rapidly, through the wet forest and before the rain was quite finished, for the summit of Whiteface. A half-hour later we were on the bald dome of that mountain; but despite the brisk wind which came from the north, haze had once more settled over

the Ossipees. For a while we sought shelter behind the summit ledge. To the south was Whiteface Intervale at the edge of the forest, Red Hill, Mt. Israel, Young Mountain, the ponds and fields, all in subdued colours after the rain and under the clouded skies. When a second shower sprinkled large drops of cold rain on Whiteface we ran into Camp Heermance, where our two friends who had been working on the trail were waiting for the storm to pass over. While it roared outside we sat chatting and smoking inside the camp, entertained by two juncos which flew in and out without fear. Finally the black clouds blew away, leaving the north-west a mass of pure gold. The wind blew up fresh and very cold. We returned to Passaconaway, cooked supper in the gathering dusk, and sat up until the fire expired.

* * *

From the summit of a mountain the city seems incredibly remote. The rolling expanse of yellow fields from which the hay has just been cut, miles of smooth woodland, occasional gleaming lakes and ponds, and other mountain peaks which cut jagged outlines or expand smoothly into the horizon, shut out thoughts of the distant city. Only

fellows with supple imaginations can realize that while they are sitting in the shelter of a summit ledge and looking meditatively over this untamed landscape, this last stronghold of the natural wild, clumsy motor trucks are lumbering over the city streets, factory chimneys are fouling the air with soot, newspaper presses are vomiting the latest tittle-tattle, and city pavements are so filled with preoccupied pedestrians that the more impatient of them are hurrying along the edge of the streets. It is hard to recognize in the luminous blue of the sky above the mountains that torn, grimy fragment which now and then contemplative men see between the rows of tall buildings in the city. For the city and the mountains have little in common.

Physically the city is hideous, especially the American city which has expanded with a rush. Monstrosity of the will to buy and sell, the city destroys not merely the natural beauty of the land but its poise as well. To return to the city after a few weeks spent in the mountains—hurrying on the train through rows of squalid shacks which grow up over night on the edges of the city and stand, dirty, inanimate and propped up years after they first began to fall, and rolling at last into a cavernous terminal—is to experience

spiritual nausea. What shock to hear the din of street traffic! What weariness to see even in the "best" parts of the city rows of buildings, many beautiful in themselves, elbowed out of sight by bastard architecture of gewgaws, whirls and ugly scrolls! Indeed, there is more beauty, more harmony, in the hit-or-miss jumble of buildings in the Cheapside region of London or Montmartre in Paris than in most of the carefully planned parts of those cities where jealous architectural ambitions have destroyed the symmetry.

At times the architecture of business districts thumbs its nose at commerce (which, ironically enough, has paid the expenses of construction!) and struggles after a touch of serenity. If the cluster of sky-scrapers in lower New York, or the Grand Central and Pennsylvania terminals, or the Custom-House Tower in Boston, or the airy bank buildings in every city which dwarf the piles of money which they carefully guard—if these buildings could be taken by themselves they might give æsthetic satisfaction. They stand as monuments to the volume of commerce. Entering their spacious halls one has no sense of the individual pushing, trampling and jostling which make up the world's business. But the secret cannot be hidden long. Look behind the Wool-

worth Building to the unlovely sheds by the river where a sweaty humanity is performing the physical labour; there is no serenity, no peace or calm, in that neighbourhood. Look down from the Custom-House Tower to the twisting streets at its base, where heavy trucks rattle from morning to night; there is no content in that spectacle. Go upstairs in the bank buildings to the hives where bank clerks and stenographers are frowning over their work and executives are figuring profit and loss. Even those circumspect fellows who spend their days in the marble halls of the banks have responsibilities which compromise their ease. Generous pieces of architecture cannot deny the exhausting unrest and the instability of the ceaseless competition which pays the bills.

No less discontented are the people who spend their days and nights in the city, who normally spend some seventy years in the yoke of commerce and die without knowing anything of the world in which their lives have been spent, whose only knowledge of life is "not death." King Lear fancied that he could "unburden'd crawl toward Death"; but he did not. No hour of the day or night but some of these folk are at their petty tasks. Even in those hours between press-time in the morning newspaper offices and the time when

newsboys are leaving the papers at doors along the streets, the windows in office buildings, stores and factories are not all dark. For some laborers are at their tasks, sorting cheques, posting ledgers, or feeding the factory machines so that the work of the world may hurry on. And during the daytime, during the hours which are reverently termed "business hours," the hurly-burly gathers speed and volume. No war ever engaged so many soldiers or inflicted so many casualties.

It is not as though these people rejoiced in their labours or saw the result of them as the farmer sees his. Beyond the weekly pay-envelope, which is slim enough in itself, most of them have no interest in their work. For as the commercial machine whirls faster and emits a greater volume of goods, the worker must perform with disheartening regularity a smaller part of the whole operation. The machine over which he labours in good time grinds up his soul. No wonder that these broken-spirited fellows cross off eight hours a day as of no value in their *lives*. To see how little joy they take in this toil one has only to appreciate how easily they are diverted. In the sweep of traffic in lower Manhattan religious and social quacks on their soap-boxes have only to take off their hats and bluster

a few words to crowd the street-corner with listeners. With listeners—not with converts. The nihilist and the anarchist shake their fists at the money-gods in the towering sky-scrapers and flagellate murderously. The audience regards the orator with incredulous eyes, makes no response of approval or disdain, and returns in bewildering good humour to the office again. On Sunday afternoons in London, irritable socialists used to mount the granite base of the Nelson monument in Trafalgar Square, and pointing a scornful finger at the government buildings in Whitehall, screech social blasphemy to all within earshot. An idle throng gathered, dreamed amiably, and at length moved off in search of other amusement. Not conviction but diversion is the object. What old building being torn down or new building "going up" but has at all hours of the working-day a crowd of idlers looking on? No gang of labourers can work in the street, mending pavements or repairing water-pipes, without drawing these lookers-on. No steeplejack works his way cautiously up a steeple or flagpole without obstructing the sidewalk traffic—the messenger boys, the shipping clerks, the bookkeepers, even the bond salesmen, who watch with heads bent back until the cords in their necks ache.

Such people, commonly known as the backbone of civilization, are "always in a fluster to escape Dulness." And fleeing day after day, year after year, that hydra-headed monster, they fear nothing so much as themselves. Boresome society, stupid theatrical performances, addle-pated comedians—these they can endure. But not themselves. Leave no man to his own thoughts! For then Dulness slays his victims. City society has raised a stout stockade against this beast—a stockade of moving-picture houses which wallow in sickly sentiment and swell with flatulent art, of musical-comedy stages where season after season the same unnourishing fare is served to starving audiences, of vaudeville houses where the same round of dreary "turns" goes on day after day, of cheap magazines which pile high their stocks of pornographic stories or phlegmatic romances. A high stockade, a certain protection against Dulness, a stockade inside of which all that reflects life has been purposely torn away. For a true picture of this city rag-tag and bob-tail would reproach those who compose it.

What with gossip, politics and business, the eddy of city life spins fast. Those who are caught in it never touch the ground until at last they are planted unresisting in it when life goes

out of them. By competition they live; competition finally kills them. Years of dull work which they frankly deplore and which draws hard lines in their faces sometimes yields them a place in which to live. Behind them, on either side of them, and often above and below them, they are squeezed by other walls and floors where others are also existing. But there is no ease in such possession; the toil must not be relaxed. Those who have bought their homes must needs work as hard to keep them. For others who also live by competition are digging a little here, tunnelling a little there, and woe be to the property-owner who does not set an alert watch day and night lest his home be undermined. The city streets are lined only with the fruits of competition; only competitors are admitted. No wonder that the Christian virtues die, and that they might be forgotten entirely but for the presence of costly churches built on the fruits of competition, many of them mortgaged like the houses in which the parishioners live. Faith and charity are soon strangled; hope alone remains.

When enemies thus become more numerous than friends, and when even friendship sometimes fails under the stress of competition, it is natural that city life should breed the twin evils, Suspicion

and Distrust. The city-dweller views with suspicion some of those he knows and most of those whom he does not know but merely reads about. At great cost to himself, alas! sometimes at the cost of his spiritual life, he has forced open the door of a house where he may live. Those whom fortune has placed in a position to thrust him out again he views with alarm. He makes friends only with those who are social equals, and affects an unctuous camaraderie towards his superiors. In those who are unlike him, who perchance profess a different religion or wear turbans instead of derbies, he has no confidence. Them he suspects of insidious rivalry, of coveting his markets; he distrusts their professions of faith because he knows his own to be false. Then war, "the purifier and the pestilence," breaks out. Even those in whose faces competition has left hard lines quaver at the cost, and to ease their distressed minds, give war a holy purpose, "descant on its vivifying virtues," and with renewed vigour invoke the divine mercy while they trample divine precepts under foot. In time the war is won or lost. But suspicion still remains.

The most deadly poison which city life distills is the vanity, pomp and artificial importance it ascribes to itself. Caught for life in the vicious

circle of competition, working day after day not to improve the man but to keep body and soul together, the city-dweller concludes that this manner of life is important. Nay, he considers it the most important in the world. He has heard of the universe in only a vague way. Let him talk to the astronomers who find this planet infested, not graced, with human life—to whom the problem of human life is only a silly tangle. From childhood to old age he is saturated in the city's material wealth. The value of its land in dollars and cents is stupendous. The size of its buildings and their number baffle the imagination. Its streets are filled with endless streams of expensive automobiles. Through miles of underground ways the subway trains rush at incredible speed, carrying an incredible number of passengers. Those who live in such an atmosphere are soon fascinated by the brilliance of its procession. They have no natural contrasts, no unsubdued mountain peaks, nothing of permanence, of reality, to sober the sophisticated struggle.

Yet those who have penetrated beyond the outskirts of civilization know how many vices she carries in her train. Lewis and Clarke found the Indians of the Far West honest, dependable and friendly; but the Indians who had come in con-

tact with the white traders stole their horses when the explorers did not watch closely. Anthropologists to-day do not find the Kwakiutl Indians of Canada invigorated by their contacts with the white man's civilization, and Stefansson finds the Eskimos beyond the Arctic Circle weakened and rendered profoundly unhappy by the busybody teachings of the white missionaries. The Sunday newspapers and popular magazine advertisements which picture the distresses of "three o'clock fatigue" and offer a panacea of "setting-up exercises," the melancholy of the clerk who gazes longingly at the glass door marked "President" but is reduced to the slavery of the time-clock, and the confusion of the untutored chap who clumsily drops a spoon in an élite restaurant and does not know what to do about it—such advertisements suggest that even for the civilized, civilization comes at high cost. Of what moment are these commonplace situations in the spiritual development of a man? Of what essential consequence are the political wrangles which keep the telegraph wires humming and the crises which the public speakers assiduously cultivate week after week in places which had previously seemed the most inoffensive? They recall the saying imputed by Emerson to

the stars as they looked down upon a choleric mortal who had just emerged from a discussion: "Why so hot, little man?"

To the genuine intelligentsia these vices of the city life are platitudes—broad, average truths which apply to averages and masses. Alert people do not live many years in the city without suspecting them; the tough-minded do not deny them or stop with so few, or consider them of supreme importance. For the city is essentially human (as the country is essentially natural), and polyglot humanity is by that symbol predominantly mediocre. And why turn sour because of this? Even Schopenhauer saw virtue in vice: "If the world were a Paradise of luxury and ease, a land flowing with milk and honey, where every Jack obtained his Jill at once and without any difficulty, men would either die of boredom or hang themselves; or there would be wars, massacres, and murders; so that in the end mankind would inflict more suffering on itself than it has now to accept at the hands of Nature." So pragmatism serves the tough-minded, and the pessimist turns sophist at last!

But many of us weary of words at times and look beyond ideas for the fundamental satisfactions of life. In the clangorous city we find many

of them, but alas, at what a price! May we then turn to the country or to the tranquil villages of the country and rest our minds while we ease the pain to ears and eyes? It is difficult to make a clear decision. The country and the town breed certain satisfactions; they fall somewhat short, however, of Paradise.

Some weary dwellers in the city, with a romantic turn of mind and the common superstition that good is merely *not bad,* that virtues are merely *not vices,* and that morality is all that is *not immoral,* fly hopefully to the country. For a few brief weeks in the summer they have escaped the tumult of the city and have found peace in the natural serenity of the country, the eternal stability of the mountains, the strength of the forests, the busy assurance of forest streams which pour down from the summits. They expand spiritually in the quiet of broad stretches of countryside and respond likewise to the sweet odours of newly-ploughed land or fresh hay. At night they see, perhaps for the first time, the huge expanse of sky; and in the number and the brilliance of the stars they find closer kinship than they ever knew before. They feel at last that they *belong,* that they are part of the great universe. Day after day the sun bakes the hayfields, but these citizens

on a promenade do not wilt under it as they do on the hard city pavements. Sometimes for a week at a time the clouds hide the mountain peaks and "vex the vales with raining" until the streams threaten to undermine the rickety road-bridges. But they do not tire of this spectacle as they soon grow weary of continued rains in the city. "Nature is an excellent sedative," said Chekhov, who lived in a more stifling intellectual period than America ever knew. "It pacifies—that is, it makes one indifferent, and it is essential in this world to be indifferent. Only those who are indifferent are able to see things clearly, to be just and to work. Of course, I am only speaking of intelligent people of fine natures; the empty and selfish are indifferent enough anyway."

Amid the friendly mountains of New England there is an end to the din, the fury, the welter of competition, which characterize city life; and despite the fact that dollar democracy has sent its advance agents to the White Hills and the lumber pirates have hacked their way through most of the forests, leaving desolation and slash in their inglorious train, the mountain scenery seems no less serene. It is still a very real element, very substantial, most stimulating; and for men whose eyes are sensitive to delicate touches of beauty,

it never wants variety. "Nature is a mutable cloud, which is always, and never the same," said Emerson. In the summer, haze, rain and sunshine afford a ceaseless variety. In the autumn it glows day by day with a new beauty. In the winter the higher summits covered with hoarfrost glitter brilliantly in the sunshine. And in the late spring the variety of sensuous greens climbing the mountains and crowned with the dark tones of the spruce-trees is truly astonishing. For the amateur the variety of birds and flowers provides an endless quest.

Of course, nature is by no means perfect; the tornadoes, the heavy wind-storms, and the extravagant methods of seed-distribution suggest that. But it is never so mediocre as large masses of humanity. And man does not improve it. Formal gardens, carefully laid-out parkways, public gardens, scientific plantations of trees, disciplined, cultivated, tamed—all these miss the essential beauty of the broad sweep of the out-of-doors. They are as emasculate as matinée idols. Only braggadocios fancy they can contribute substantially to nature from their own pompous personalities. So the outdoor painters like Corot, who copied nature with fidelity, surpass in their art the classical landscapes of Claude and of Turner, who

believed that no landscape could be painted without human figures.

On paper and to the sentimental, the farmer's lot seems far superior to that of the city-dweller. In some cases it may be. The occasional farmer who has inherited sturdy white buildings from one or two thrifty generations may, by hard and exhaustive physical labour, cultivate his land to advantage. The physical labour and the sweet air keep his body in a glow of health. No less healthy is his mind, his grasp on life, his instinctive understanding and conformance to its fundamental principles. The lurid cries of socialism, syndicalism, communism and revolution which terrify the city property-owners become an empty, mocking echo in the mountains and valleys. The brilliant procession of the city at times tempts him to desert his farm and fills his mind with envy, but he does not know the quality of the fortune which is his. His is as independent as life can be in the contemporary social order. He is not crowded and stifled in his home; from his farmhouse radiate acres of fields and woods. And there is no psychological break in his life. The city clerk labours with tired eyes over dull papers with which he has no concern; he receives his pay in specie—an unreal product of his work. What

could be less satisfying? The farmer puts his investments in the ground. Upon the stability of the weather, the intelligence of his planting and cultivating, and the amount of labour expended, depends his reward. Day by day he sees with his own eyes the progress of crops planted with his own hands and cared for by the strength of his own back. And at length with his own hands he harvests. He, too, poor fellow, has his troubles when he goes to market; for then he is caught in the maelstrom of competition. And as the season moves on he has anxious days when rain does not come or comes to excess and when hail threatens to destroy his weeks of labour. A human being, he, too, complains of the hardness of his lot and looks with envy at city tourists whirling by in the summer in shiny automobiles. But his life is after all the natural one.

This is largely a fictitious portrait. Such farmers, if any exist at all, are rare in New England these days. During the past century the most robust stock in all New England has gone to the city, has dissipated its substance in her service; and for the past twenty years Boston has been wondering whence her future vitality would come. To adventuresome walkers who follow the back-roads of these mountains—roads grown to grass

year by year, crowded between lines of tough birches and aspens—the overgrown cellar-holes and tumble-down farm-buildings are a familiar as well as melancholy sight. Many years ago there was no grass in these roads. At one time the fields were tilled and the apple orchards pruned. But gradually the pioneer farmers died, their children slipped away to the city, contributed the "iron of the mountain winds" to the wheel of city life, and prospered. The city has squandered that strength, and no more of that kind will come from the northern mountains. One cannot fly in the face of history. If this farm life has run out and if the vigorous folk of the country have deserted it for city living, there must be ample ethnological reason. And those who would lisp in numbers about farm life must shut their eyes to a vast deal that is scrawny and dingy and which soon grows wearisome—which, in fine, becomes depressing.

To the city-dweller passing a few weeks in the country, the subsistence of those farmers who still cling to the wretched, run-down backwoods farms remains a mystery. Some of these people live in unpainted houses whose roofs have partly fallen in, whose windows are stuffed with rags; and they still put their thin crops of hay in barns hopefully

propped up against that day when the weight of a heavy snow will surely break them down. Talk of the pure mountain air! The stuffy, unventilated, untidy kitchens of these hovels are redolent of several years' cooking—a heavy odour compounded of many coarse dishes cooked languidly and eaten without relish. Out-of-doors these shiftless creatures, dressed in cotton trousers patched at the knees, blue shirts patched with black cloth at the elbows, shod in broken shoes with their unfastened socks running down, and wearing broad straw hats stained with sweat where they touch the head—they inspire no envy in the city-dweller. And when on rare occasions one penetrates inside the hovels where such folk exist, one feels more disgust than pity. These fellows have there a guilty, timid expression like that of a woodchuck caught in his hole. The poverty-stricken unfortunates in the city who crowd together in dark and foul tenements are not so spiritless. Poverty and Dulness have not destroyed their courage. Hope at least remains, and companionship as well. The plight of the impoverished farmer who lives in his crumbling house in the backwoods is indeed the most miserable.

New England country towns, however, have

bright faces; and at first glance the city-dweller often covets them. Nearly all who live there live comfortably, if not brilliantly or extravagantly; some of them, indeed, pull together small fortunes and travel modestly in America and Europe. From the vantage-point of a neighbouring hill-top nothing seems more thoroughly attractive, full of benignant beauty, than the handful of white houses and barns, stores and shops, the whole garnished with thick maples and tall elms, which composes the average New England town a few miles from the railroad. Most of these village houses are built on the broad, generous lines of the old Colonial or Georgian architecture —the most beautiful period in American development. Years of not too strenuous living have left informal paths worn from door to road and grassy driveways from the barn. The shrubs and vines which hide the corners of the porch, like the grass which nearly hides the granite step, are not so meticulously trimmed as to rob them of a suggestion of ease. On winter evenings the light of electric or oil lamps which filters through naked trees is sincerely inviting. How beautiful these unpretentious houses are appears by contrast with the occasional house of later date, built forty years ago after the flimsy manner of

suburban dwellings, long and thin to fit a city lot, high-pitched, with hideous fancy work along the eaves, with "piazzas" of equally hideous scrolls and poles badly turned, the whole daubed with tawdry colors. Nothing is more depressing than such an architectural perversion against the background of New England hills. Nothing tells more of the obsequious worship of the city by those whom fortune has left in the country.

To the city-dweller athirst for natural beauty these New England villages bring a vibrant satisfaction and harmony. And strangers too hastily confound this blend of natural and human beauty with continued intellectual enjoyment. Amid such surroundings the city seems so bad that this must indeed be good.

For some it may be. Some whose means of living give them no anxiety and whose philosophy does not flourish on dispute can indeed find satisfaction in such communities, enjoying from month to month the silent progress of the seasons and the feel of mountain summits under foot. Wordsworth kept his sense of proportion in the mountains of Old England. But the unpoetical man who has become a specialist on books, on art, on music, or on the eternal question of how to live, runs the danger of finding his ardour cooling

in an atmosphere which affords neither fuel nor draft. Perchance he can talk of his art to a willing group, but the fine, subtle, esoteric points which distinguish his knowledge from commonplaceness soon fade when they are not challenged by intelligent disagreement. Unless he is well along in life he will not prosper intellectually, as country doctors do not prosper professionally.

In the country as well as in the town social life is very dull. The "back to the farm" cult must not pass over that. The large number of people in the city welded in a sort of comradeship by mutual fear of Dulness provides the means by which the monster is kept at bay, if not altogether subdued. Most of the *country-men* have a horror of that beast which is no less overpowering, but especially in the backwoods their battle is less successful. The farmers who live on remote hill-sides have no intellectual interests to divert them and must travel long distances over rough country roads for companionship. Boredom unbalances them. Hence the crimes, the murders, the sexual excesses common to such places in quantity all out of proportion to the number of people involved. Hence the petty enmities, jealousies, the pitiless gossip and uncharitable prying which destroy neighbourhood

amity. These poisons penetrate so thoroughly that it is always difficult and sometimes quite impossible to touch the real heart of the backwoods farmer.

In the villages where two or three hundred people live in close proximity, active about their several businesses, Dulness has less chance to slip in, but it wears a different mask and comes there all the same. For in New England villages the social life mimics the city—its fashions, its fads, its community societies, its lugubrious church functions, its commerce. Thrice blessed is that store where nickel-plated scales and noisy cash-registers, and even that symbol of breathless hurry, the cash-carrier, attest to enterprise if not necessarily to utility. What conscious pride the clerk takes in demonstrating his skill with these engines of efficiency, as if he, too, had caught the city manner and must be reckoned as one of the elect! So with the literary clubs, the round-robins, the Granges, the Masons, the current-events clubs—faint and often quaint echoes of city life. These people, too, are in a fluster, attending all meetings, so that those who hear a paper on Joseph C. Lincoln or Gene Stratton-Porter at the Wednesday evening meeting of the literary club find themselves in the same company

on Thursday evening when the current-events club slays Bolshevism. No busy dweller in the city reads his paper more assiduously than these people read in the *Reporter* the accounts of club meetings which they have attended and brief local paragraphs which record news already published in extenso in that diaphanous journal of inaccuracy and exaggeration which blows quickly and unseen through every New England village. And here is in miniature a replica of the city's complacence.

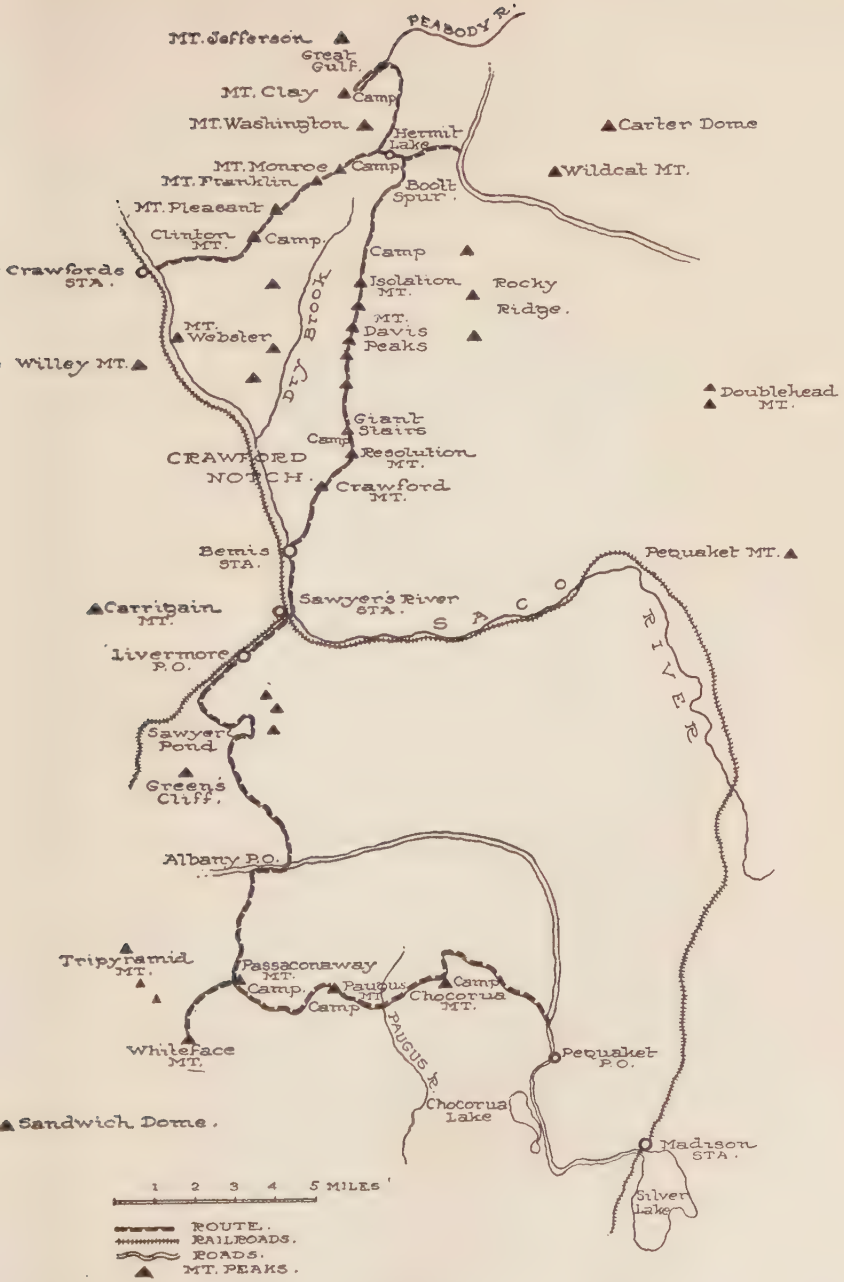
Competition has robbed the city of natural beauties and the spiritual values which accrue from them. In their place, however, in the very midst of the pushing and shoving, the city has nourished other very real beauties whose values are surely as great. It is in the city that Shakespeare and Molière are played, the Beethoven symphonies heard, the Van Dycks, the Millets, the Rembrandts hung. Rubbing elbows with the hurrying throng of competitors is that buoyant world of aspiring artists, aglow with the hope of accomplishment. There, too, are craftsmen who take joy in doing their work well; business men who by faith keep commerce from being sordid; social workers who have the good of their fellows at heart; and thousands of inconspicuous citizens who are not distressed by the sour smells

of their environment and who light-heartedly keep themselves sweet. It is a gay life and a cool life in the heat of the city. It is a life, moreover, attendant upon sublime satisfactions, which keeps them looking out rather than in, which increases their range of perception.

From the summit of a mountain the city seems incredibly remote, but the art and beauty which live in the city and even flourish on the spoils of competition seem close at hand. These human accomplishments are not lost in the majestic sweep of mountains and valleys. The same exaltations, the same spiritual rhythms, spring abstractly from natural and human beauties. Strange that so fragile a flower should blossom in the coarseness of the inchoate masses of the city, as the lily flourishes in the black slime of a swamp. But sufficient that it does live there. And sufficient that citizens who keep themselves attuned to it are balanced by it and so do not easily lose their heads.

* * *

*Pierre:* Well, well, well, well! Whew! I never heard anything quite so jumbled and untrue in my life. You first say city life is bad and then conclude that it is good; you envy the lot of the


MT. Jefferson
Great Gulf
PEABODY R.
MT. Clay
Camp
MT. Washington
Hermit Lake
Carter Dome
MT. Monroe
Camp
Wildcat MT.
MT. Franklin
Boott Spur
MT. Pleasant
Clinton MT.
Camp
Camp
Crawfords STA.
Isolation MT.
Rocky Ridge.
MT. Webster
MT. Davis
Peaks
Willey MT.
Dry Brook
Doublehead MT.
Giant Stairs
Camp
CRAWFORD NOTCH.
Resolution MT.
Crawford MT.
Bemis STA.
Pequaket MT.
Carrigain MT.
Sawyer's River STA.
SACO RIVER
Livermore P.O.
Sawyer Pond
Green's Cliff.
Albany P.O.
Tripyramid MT.
Passaconaway MT.
Camp
Paugus MT.
Camp
Chocorua MT.
Camp
Whiteface MT.
PAUGUS R.
Pequaket P.O.
Sandwich Dome.
Chocorua Lake
Madison STA.
Silver Lake
1 2 3 4 5 MILES
ROUTE.
RAILROADS.
ROADS.
MT. PEAKS.

farmer and then deplore it; you say the village life is peaceful and then that it is only the city in miniature. I haven't the slightest notion of what you really believe, and I doubt whether you have.

*The Author:* There you go again! What you lack more than anything else is refinement. You have never learned that all truths are comparative except fundamental truths, and no one knows what the fundamental truths are. You think a subject of this sort can be treated as though it were either all black or all white. Your criticism is about as helpful as a punch in the jaw.

*Pierre:* Maybe so, maybe so! Well, anyway my life as compared with yours is much more simple. You appear to have a lot to think about. As for me—give me a tranquil life. Let me be ignorant of comparative truth, and let me be unrefined.

* * *

During our day in camp we had frequently discussed the further course of our journey. There was still more of the Sandwich Range to the west —the sharp summit of Tripyramid which pokes a knife-edge of granite in the sky, and the rounded dome of Sandwich Mountain, gentle and graceful, though recently shorn quite bare by the lumber

merchant. But northward rose the Presidential Range, monarchs of the White Mountains, and crowned by the rugged peak of Mt. Washington, where we hoped soon to be. I knew the Sandwich Range from previous journeys, and also the Presidential; but between lay a country strange to both of us, plotted on the map, but to us quite unreported. We examined the contours, measured the distances, traced the trails, and wondered what adventure might be in store for us in such plain country. More than the map could specify, for adventure lies as much inside the head as outside it.

When we awoke on Thursday morning a mountain fog was trailing through the trees, hiding all the shaggy head of Passaconaway above us, enveloping the trees in sombre mystery, tinging life with poetical softness. It was a fitting day for exploration.

We did not get under way promptly, as railroad trains pull out on time regardless of the conductor's disposition. On the contrary, until we had actually left camp under full marching-equipment, we were not certain of starting at all. A day in camp had tempered our ambition; and besides, the weather was constantly in doubt. During breakfast the fog had lifted, but it did not dis-

solve; long fingers were lapping towards the summit of Whiteface from the bowl, and the sky was heavy with dark clouds. We put off the lugubrious business of packing; we sat in the doorway of the camp and discussed the weather indolently. For in rainy weather it is well to have a roof over one's head, and the roofs in the woods between Passaconaway and the Presidential Range were probably few and at least uncertain. Our campmates lingered about the fire, politely urging us to wait another day. But at ten o'clock we packed our duffles; a half-hour later we started up the trail towards the tip of Passaconaway.

Carrying packs, as this book has already affirmed, is no business for gentlemen. All such had best hire porters for these humiliating pursuits and free the back as completely as the mind. Rousseau passes for a philosopher of nature, in the classroom if not in the open. Give ear to his precious philosophy: "Walking animates and enlivens my spirits; I can hardly think when in a state of inactivity; my body must be exercised to make my judgment active . . . I dispose of all nature as I please; my heart, wandering from object to object, approximates and unites with those that please it, is surrounded by charming images, and becomes intoxicated with delicious sensa-

tions." And of the other penmen who burst into raptures over the out-of-doors—Sterne, Hazlitt, Stevenson, Borrow—it is doubtful whether they essayed a mountain trail with a lurching, forty-pound handicap at their backs. Unlike Rousseau, as we went at this last five hundred feet of Passaconaway, we were not intoxicated with "delicious sensations." On the contrary, we were overwhelmed with shortness of breath and a heart palpitation which seemed as though it must be audible twenty rods away.

Passaconaway grows spruce woods to the very tip; views of the surrounding territory are to be had only from two open ledges on the west and on the east. In due time we had climbed to the eastern look-out, 4,116 feet above the sea. The view was as dark as the clouds. The peak of Chocorua had withdrawn from the gaze of human eyes whilst the weather gods held council there. In the midst of a dull landscape Chocorua Lake shone like a pot of molten silver. Bands of dim sunshine illumined the north slopes of Paugus and the fertile fields of Albany Intervale. But the summit of Passaconaway was cold and moist. We lingered there, free of our packs, smoking, and surveying the country to the north where our journey lay. We were in no mood for expedition,

but it was the better part of wisdom to have daylight for walking; and at length, with noontide nearly on us, we took the trail marked "Albany Intervale."

And it was no holiday promenade, this Albany trail down the northern side of Passaconaway. In four days in the mountains we had ventured far, but we had not yet descended on the shoot of a landslide, down a broad path of rock polished smooth by streams of water. Such was the way to Albany Intervale. One might as well let one's pack slide down at the end of a rope, from parapet to parapet, and follow unencumbered. But we had no rope and no imagination either; so we dug our hobnails into every crevice, clung to the tiny spruces and birches which grow in the fissures, and descended cautiously, resting our nerves meanwhile by frequent pauses. In the haze to the north rose the Presidential peaks, mysterious mountains so far away. It was difficult to believe that we might cross all the intervening country on foot and still go that far before the holidays were over.

* * *

*Pierre:* Those are beautiful mountains 'way over there. It seems to me the basest sort of

covetousness to want to climb them. Familiarity breeds contempt, old man. If we want to respect those mountains we ought to remain right where we are. It is sheer spiritual impudence to go another foot.

*The Author:* My friend, wherever human feet have trod we go unprotesting. *En avant!* May the devil take him who first cries, "Hold, enough!"

* * *

Half-way down the slide a tiny stream came from the woods to the west, crooning softly and trickling in shallow green pools where the ledges were flat like tables. We stopped to drink, to rest and to watch the clouds rise above the Presidentials on the northern sky-line. And lunch-time being close at hand we followed this same brook back into the woods to a broad basin, cool and shaded; and there, close by the water, we built a fire and cooked a meal. Then for the fourth or fifth time within two hours we sprawled on our backs, with the colour of the sky in our eyes, listening meanwhile to the running water. The afternoon was well along before we started down the slide again.

By two o'clock we had descended to the forest

level where we pushed on swiftly through a thick growth of bushes. Once out of this tangle and on a lumber road we felt merry once more, and burst into a bastard sort of song, a pot-pourri of whistling and balladry which would have astonished alien ears. Once we came to a blueberry-patch where myriads of large, firm berries streaked the colour of the sky across the ground. It was late—absurdly late—but we could not resist them. We filled two empty cracker-tins with berries and for several mornings thereafter enjoyed the luxury of blueberries with hot oatmeal. Then on again, swiftly and boisterously, until at three o'clock we came out at Albany Intervale with less than half the day's scheduled journey behind.

## III

HAVING been in the woods nearly five days, we felt the need of readjustment when we came to the sandy road. For although this end of Swift River Intervale is no metropolis, supports no store, no houses except Swift River Inn and its cottages, the manners of the woods are clearly not the manners of summer resorts. The trail to Sawyer Pond, whither we were bound, left the road a mile to the east; thus we should be in the woods again very quickly. But since our store of provisions had begun to dwindle more rapidly than we had anticipated, we hoped to make our enforced invasion of civilization profitable by replenishing our supply of bacon, rice and sugar. There were women on the veranda of Swift River Inn. And as we approached them what self-confidence we had been sedulously cultivating trickled mockingly away. What sort of preparation for the impeccable society of females are five days in the woods?

* * *

*The Author:* Don't you suppose we can get on without provisions for a day or two longer?

*Pierre:* Buck up, old man! You don't know these women, do you? You're much too self-conscious. We look rough, but we can be exceedingly refined in our address. Use the future conditional; that's the most refined in our language. Don't say, "Can we buy some provisions?" or "May we?" but "Would it be possible to buy provisions here?"

* * *

And, lo! it was so. We removed our hats with a refined, modest flourish and fell at once into the future conditional. No sooner had we asked for provisions than the hostess of the Inn supplied them, while the summer guests (like recluses, eager to hear about the world) plied us with questions about our trip and our plans. One tested the weight of a pack but could not lift it from the ground. We were not distressed by her failure. It is said that the masculine sex is conceited. To which we reply, "And why not?"

Sawyer Pond lies five miles in the woods north of Swift River Intervale by a U.S. Forest Service

trail which ascends a small ridge between Green's Cliff and Birch Hill and then drops to the pond (1,790 feet) just behind Mt. Tremont and Owl Cliff. We forded Swift River and began a tedious and monotonous walk, resting frequently to ease our shoulders and speculate on the distance. It was a steady, grinding progress, unrewarded by views or striking beauty. Once we passed two porcupines; they tumbled out of the way indifferently. At a small tributary to Rob Brook we saw a deer leap into the woods; tracks in the mud showed that she had been drinking at the brook before we came into sight. We reached a soggy shore of Sawyer Pond at 6:45. The sky was overcast; dusk was already tempering the day.

Sawyer Pond is the usual New Hampshire mountain lake, a few acres in area, boggy and marshy, and thick all around with a tangle of tough alders. We were not only weary and sullen, but anxious to find a camping-site without delay and to settle for the night. Half-way across the pond, on the opposite shore, was what appeared to be a high knoll. We started hurriedly around the southern shore, ready to walk to the knoll if no other spot seemed favourable. What evil spirits haunt the shores of mountain ponds?

Why do they vex the shores with bogs and thickets? *Ah! Coquin de sort!* For a half-hour we struggled along the shore in bushes above our waists, sloshing through the marshes, stumbling over concealed sticks and at last cursing until the echoes rang. Then, pushing out to the pond, we found we were scarcely more than half-way to our knoll, while night was coming fast.

* * *

*The Author:* Damn these bushes! Let's sit down and smoke.

*Pierre:* The best suggestion yet. What I want to know is who proposed that we come here? Who ever heard of this blasted pond anyway?

*The Author:* "By the pricking of my thumbs
Something wicked this way comes."

*Pierre:* "Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble."

*The Author:* By Juno, Euthydemus, nothing is accomplished by this sort of going.

*Pierre:* It seems so to me, O Socrates! We aren't making any progress this way. By Jupiter, Socrates, let us take off our boots and stockings and wade along the edge of the shore.

*  *  *

An admirable proposal! We pulled off our boots, tied them together, thrust the stockings inside, and began to wade close to the shore, feeling the icy cold of water near the inlets, and elsewhere the warmth of water which had rested all day in the sunlight. So we progressed nearly two rods until the bottom of the pond fell away into melancholy depths while the shore receded into a deep cove between us and the knoll for which we were leading. It was now my turn to make a suggestion. We had just passed three or four water-soaked logs on which were four loose boards, apparently in years past some fisherman's raft. I proposed that we ride on it majestically to yonder port. Upon testing its buoyancy, however, we found that while it would hold our packs, it sank when we crept aboard. *Semper pro impedimenta!* We decided to give our packs a voyage, and began to push the laden raft close by the shore. All went well until we reached deep water again.

*  *  *

*The Author:* By Jove, Euthydemus, nothing is accomplished by this sort of going.

*Pierre:* Great God of Russia! Let's take off all our clothes and push the damned raft straight across to the point.

* * *

And we did so. Removing all our adornments except the barest necessities—our glasses and pipes—we started swimming and smoking, pushing the raft steadily towards the knoll, the night meanwhile setting in black. It must have been eight o'clock when the raft gently bumped the rocks a hundred feet from the knoll on which we had pinned our faith. Mt. Tremont, rising steeply on the left, was faintly suggested against the sky. While Pierre steadied the raft I ferried our household goods through waist-high water to the shore, stepping cautiously over the rocky bottom to avoid dropping them in the water. After several trips our baggage was all ashore. Standing on a flat rock we rubbed dry and warm, well-pleased with our little adventure.

Why should we be in such a good humour? Why were we not as blasphemous as army officers? We were already tired after a long day's tramp over fairly commonplace country. We had been out of sorts when we found the shores of the pond so boggy and confused with rank

bushes. We were hungry. The prospects of making camp and cooking supper in the darkness were by no means inviting. Moreover, the knoll to which we had come was almost as thick with bushes as the shores we had struggled to penetrate; its only advantage was the absence of bog. Surely no great cause for merriment! Yet the variety of our approach, together with the consciousness of having reached the end of our journey, put us in such high spirits that the drowsy pond awoke to the echoes of human laughter. In that dynamic mood we should have been discouraged by nothing.

At the top of the knoll was a sandy spot, about ten feet square, where we might be free of bushes. We carried the packs up the hill-side through evergreen bushes that scraped our bare legs, and while Pierre built a fire of dry roots which burned fiercely as soon as the match was applied, I stumbled down the bushy hill in the darkness to fill our kettles with water. From the shore of the pond the red glow of the fire on Pierre and a lone spruce behind him was a most cheerful sight. After supper we tried the echoes toward Mt. Tremont. The voices of the mountains flung back our shouts like solemn giants, speaking in quick succession and concluding in a

faint, whispering monotone. Black as the night was, and starless, we could still see the dim flash of the pond, the outline of Green's Cliff beyond, and the ridges of Mt. Tremont rising ominously behind. Thunder began to roll to the north. The knoll was so homelike that we had nearly forgotten that we had no roof over our heads. We put several sticks on the fire and decided to get what sleep we could at once and then get up again to protect our packs with ponchos when the rain came. A barred owl, or perhaps a great-horned owl, hooted twice mysteriously from the far shore. Meanwhile came a tremulous call, like a siren, rising quickly up the scale. We heard it several times but did not know what it could be. At 3:30 the next morning rain spattering in our faces woke us and we got up according to the plans, but fifteen minutes later it stopped. Returning to our blankets we slept soundly until 6:30.

By daylight Sawyer Pond was more beautiful—although, like all small mountain ponds, a little lonely, pitiful and *triste*. Everywhere the woods marched down to the shores in mass formation, defiantly, as though they might choke the pond out of existence. The surface was nevertheless placid. But we abandoned our project for push-

ing north to Nancy Pond. (*Pierre:* To hell with ponds! Let's strike for the mountains.) By a journey of eleven miles, two of them along the state road, we might reach Camp Resolution, high on the Montalban Ridge, before night. But there were difficulties as yet unknown and unconsidered. After breakfast we explored the knoll we had reached in the darkness. Looking towards Mt. Tremont, Pierre suddenly let out a savage howl: "Good God! we're on an island." And so we were! What had seemed to be a cove in the gloom of the previous evening was in truth the shore of the pond, and we were now separated from the mainland by two or three hundred feet. So in human life impatient people fancy they have found a short cut to happiness when they are really poking into a *cul de sac.* Like the Cheeryble Brothers, who were always laughing pleasantly together (and sometimes seemed rather asinine), we set up a shout at this new turn of fortune. The raft was still where we had left it, but the stretch of water between the shore and the island looked shallow enough to be forded. We carried our baggage to a point nearest the mainland and took off our clothes again. The bottom of the pond was muddy, sending up dark whirls of muck wherever we

stepped. And although the water was deeper than we had anticipated we found one route where it was never above our shoulders. First we carried our clothes across experimentally. After all they were the least valuable part of the cargo. Returning to the island we swung our packs lengthwise against the backs of our necks and carried them cautiously to shore. Then taking advantage of the situation we went back into the water for a bit of a swim. The first white-throated sparrow we had heard was singing on the island, but clearly the flush of spring had gone by, for according to his midsummer manner he flatted the last few notes of his song and lost its distinguishing freshness. Again we were on our way, climbed the steep edge of Mt. Tremont through the woods and found an abandoned lumber road which we followed two miles through wet and rugged woods to the Carrigain-Livermore logging railroad. Once when we sat down to repair a pair of broken spectacles a magnolia warbler flew into a near-by tree. Most beautiful of the warblers, a gay fellow of black, yellow and white, he was as pleasing as the crossbills on Passaconaway.

By eleven o'clock we were fairly out of the woods in Livermore, a lumber village supporting

a railroad, a steam sawmill and a hundred men who live with their families in frame houses with sharp-peaked roofs—all as plain and as similar as the people who live inside them. Sheltered by rugged hills, sung to by a broad mountain torrent, the people of Livermore might live in a spot of rare beauty. But as mechanically as they saw trees and load the boards on railroad cars, they have built their unlovely houses in plain rows, after the fashion of city tenement districts; and they have cut down all the trees which might shelter them from the baking sun of August. The dreariness and wretchedness of their village are undisguised. With the sawmill screaming for more logs, the people have no time for beauty or living. And how can children learn to distinguish beauty from ugliness in such surroundings? As if to prove the point of our reflections, the lad of thirteen or fourteen years who tended the camp-store spoke as foully as the grown men outside. We made our purchases of bacon, beans, crackers and matches and set out down the road for Sawyer's River, glad to shake Livermore dust from our boots. We rode the two miles to Bemis in an automobile as guests of a generous-minded woman driver who happened to pass our way. Then after crossing the Saco River we plunged

into the woods again and climbed to the Montalban Ridge which runs fifteen sky-line miles to the summit of Mt. Washington. Once more we were high in the mountains; they tumbled precipitously into Crawford Notch, losing their outlines in the blue haze which marked the winding course of that deep pass.

* * *

*Pierre:* Well, I feel safe again. I was almost afraid of being seduced during those two miles of highway.

*The Author:* Seduced?

*Pierre:* Yes, seduced. After five or six days in the woods I was afraid I might be debauched by an automobile or the smell of a steak cooking in some kitchen or the sight of a feather-bed. But I was not even tempted. My virtue is assured. In fact, I was offended by the sight of roads and houses and disgusted by the automobiles and their smug passengers. They were chugging along as though they were enjoying the mountains.

*The Author:* As far as that goes, we think we are enjoying the mountains. What's the difference?

*Pierre:* The difference, my dear fellow, is that

we *know* we are enjoying them. And if that does not please your sense of impartiality, let me point out gently that we have been in the mountains and know what they are; whereas all those blackguards know about the mountains is that they have to shift gears on the steepest hills. If we are not more holy than they, then I'm a Piccadilly dandy and you're the Crown Prince of Monaco.

* * *

The day was intolerably humid, of a piece with all the weather since our journey began. And thunder which had grumbled across Sawyer Pond the evening before had continued all night and morning. As we set foot on the summit of Mt. Crawford, so high above the valley and yet so close to it, thunder rolled across the northern mountains in a long, reverberating discord. Such thunder as that one must take seriously. We rinsed our parched throats in the brackish water which lay in fissures of the rocky summit, rested discreetly, rejoiced again to be so far above the lowlands, and started towards Camp Resolution for shelter from the threatening storm.

For the first few miles the Montalban Ridge is partly bare and partly grown to spruces. We

dipped through several dark hollows crowded with small trees and crossed open spaces where we might look off, regard the landmarks and gauge our progress. The gods once played at bowls here, with no lack of implements; huge boulders were sprinkled all over the crest where these superhuman players had left them. And when they were all in the frolic the game must have been as thunderous as the northern sky, which was growing constantly more threatening. We passed Crawford Dome without venturing to the summit and crossed to a shoulder of Mt. Resolution. And almost before we realized how far the path had led us we were at the turning which drops abruptly off the ridge to Camp Resolution. Thrice welcome, indeed, was the roof of that shelter, a hundred feet below.

We scrambled down breathlessly, tumbled the packs into camp and flung ourselves on the spruce bedding, exhausted. A half-hour must have passed while we lay there, our eyes closed and our minds full of dreamy content. "Hallo!" Pierre exclaimed, looking into a dark corner. Hallo, indeed! For there was a porcupine, squeezing himself behind a pile of fire-wood. Nine days in every ten, Camp Resolution is no doubt his; we were the real intruders, and not

he. But by means of a stick we indicated that for the present at least Camp Resolution could no longer provide him with shelter; and bristling all over and grunting a manner of bestial protest he climbed up the far wall to the roof. Here was an impasse indeed. We poked; he clung to the logs, hissing and affecting a vicious attitude. But at last by combining our strength we tore him loose, and he ran out the unguarded corner of the camp. It is curious how the superstition persists that porcupines can shoot their quills. Even in the arid wastes of the Arabian desert the Bedouins cling to that belief. In his masterpiece of travel books, "Arabia Deserta," C. M. Doughty makes note of that: "It is also the Arab's fable," he writes, "that the creature can shoot out his pricks against an enemy." Yet no wild beast is less offensive than these gauche animals, forever grunting and nosing about in quest of salt and grease. Their quilled backs protect them well—almost too well. For unless one attacks them viciously, porcupines never make haste to get away. They are not so obliging. But let no one suppose that these clumsy movements are all of which they are capable. No; they are merely lazy. Attack them to some pur-

pose, with a savage yell or two, and they fly off almost as rapidly as rabbits.

While thunder still echoed to the north and began to roar also in the east, as though two storms were coming together, we cooked our supper, washed in the brook below the camp, in icy water which left us entirely refreshed, lighted our pipes, and as evening fell gradually, we stood on the ledge before camp, looking at the huge, towering cliffs of Giant Stairs behind us, or northwest over mountain ridges to Webster, miles of spruce forest lying between—a vast panorama, far too extensive, far too varied, far too rich to be tasted in what time we had to spare.

The two storms approached; they would meet, it seemed, over this ridge of mountains. Towards eight o'clock the thunder increased in volume, a succession of long reverberations which shook the ground, while flashes of lightning lit up the woods and mountains like the brightest glare of noon-time. As the wind increased in fury, bending the tops of spruce-trees, whistling and whining through their branches, we made camp cosy for the night. By 8:30 the storm broke. Lightning snapped all around us. Thunder shook the camp and "ripped with rubato

rage." The wind now blew furiously; rain swept viciously over the roof. Grateful for shelter and security, we crept into the sleeping-bags, watching the fire struggle with the rain. It was a glorious storm. But we fell asleep long before the skies had cleared.

Indeed, we slept eleven hours that night. When I awoke on Saturday morning the hands of the watch pointed to 8:15. And while I yawned and stretched, a junco flew into the camp, and an American crossbill flew into the fire-place in search of food. The red of his plumage was brilliant enough to kindle the fire, and would that he had done so! For if the whole truth must be set down in this volume, we made a sorry business of that morning and risked the whole promenade.

Some soporific old wind-bag has said: "Look after the morning until nine o'clock and the rest of the day will look after itself." One is reluctant to subscribe to such doctrines, perhaps only because so many others do. But despite all that the early hours are critical. Now, after a soaking rain-storm any fool knows that open fires cannot be kindled casually. I knew that, on this Saturday morning in August, after eleven full hours of sleeping; but still I went about this

business indifferently. A few sticks caught and held a flame, but the fire did not flourish, and the sleepy builder did nothing to stimulate it. Our dispositions rose and fell with the heat. After the oatmeal had cooked somewhat sluggishly the blaze shrank to a smoulder too weak for cooking griddles. I refused to believe it and poured batter into the pan; the cake stuck to the bottom, however, and crumpled when I tried to flip it over. Pierre delivered a long and perfidious malediction; and as for me, I was too ashamed to say a word. We ate the oatmeal phlegmatically, quite without relish, and conversation expired with the last gasp of flame. So breakfast lasted from nine to eleven.

"Come on," I said, "and get this fire burning before we murder each other."

Pierre indicated that he could not honestly forswear murder, even with the fire crackling merrily. It was, indeed, high time for action.

We climbed up above the camp clearing to some birch-trees where bark was hanging in long strips. Two armfuls of this would be sufficient for a Saturnalian feast. In the woods to the west I found a dead birch which I cut and split and a standing spruce which I prepared in the same fashion. Meanwhile Pierre had collected an abundance of

kindling. We laid the sticks carefully, stacked the damp wood all around, and applied a match in several places. Lo! the fire was soon roaring —snapping and sizzling hot all the rest of the day.

* * *

*Pierre:* Thank God for our immortal souls.

*The Author:* Thank God for our stock of provisions.

*Pierre:* They don't count. I agree with the Russian intellectuals, that nothing matters but the immortal soul.

*The Author:* I notice that you make that profound observation while your stomach is full, the sun is pleasantly warm, and you are smoking your first pipe for the day.

*Pierre:* Pardon me for using an unfair argument, but O hell! The soul lives independent of the body. Starve the body or freeze it; but you do not harm the soul. You are a bourgeois. No good will come to the world from such as you. Your immortal soul is about as sweet and juicy as a sheet of wrapping-paper.

* * *

The fire did not languish once all afternoon.

* * *

Amid the rumble of exhortation which is for ever ringing in the ears of growing children it is at once noticeable and deplorable that so little heed is given to the rare art of failing successfully. Pure success draws all the claqueurs. Parents who have felt the pinch of life and seen in retrospect how narrowly they missed filling the secret chest with doubloons are eager that their children shall not leave the main highway at precisely the same point. Well-provided citizens of the town strut up and down the public-school platforms with a manner instinctively dignified, and dribble platitudes about success while the hands of the clock stand still. Business men of prominence and influence consent to write their formulas for success in the popular magazines. The life of Abraham Lincoln is searched for its secret and unrolled before the wondering eyes of schoolchildren with scant respect for its spiritual qualities. Benjamin Franklin's "Autobiography" is "put into" the schools for its good example: "Because it is sound advice, sir; no nonsense about it," as the school committee-men say with a twirl of their huge mustachios. Life is thus

pictured a gruelling race up a steep hill; he who lingers by the wayside to tie his shoe, to sip at a gurgling brook, or to admire the graceful curve of distant hills and valleys—is lost!

Humbug! There have been and still are some who climb the hill not by the main highway but by dim, twisting paths which wander through the forest; not at a steady, muscle-wearying pace, but leisurely, or with intermittent bursts of speed which are rewarded by long rests beside the streams. Occasionally they are "the cool persons in the meadows by the wayside" whom Stevenson observed "lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbows." At times they poke out on the bare ridges, recline indolently (some say insolently) at full length and watch the perspiring stream on the main highway below and above them. For they are invariably passed. Only an occasional one finds the way to the top—and then absurdly late. They are not successes. Surely they are not failures. They are a blend of the two—successful failures.

Those determined men whose footsteps ring out rhythmically on the metallic surface of the main highway give such dawdlers a passing, supercilious glance and speed on, always hopefully.

The commerce between the two groups is rarely more intimate. Some of those runners who are still below, or who have fallen exhausted by the wayside, look up on the ridges a bit enviously, if questioningly; but when those who are well up towards the summit look down they swell with scorn. "Ignoble, slothful ease," they sputter. "It is hard to fail," said one high up who was intellectually an automaton; "but it is worse never to have tried to succeed." No doubt the altitude makes the climbers light-headed. Sir Francis Younghusband testifies that "at great altitudes men get very nervous and irritable; . . . they begin to lose patience with one another, and the higher they climb the deeper they hate." What passes through the minds of the mystic figures on the ridges one has more difficulty in determining. For they are rarely provoked to discussion, and when they do talk it is in strange language.

It is recorded that when the rich and brilliant Alexander the Great, King of Greece, Persia, Egypt—nay, a god, duly enrolled among the sacred deities of all the cities of his great empire, asked Diogenes to name his greatest wish, the tub-dweller replied simply: "Do not stand between me and the sun." Ribaldry—sheer ribaldry from the lips of one whose possessions

numbered only a cloak and a wallet, and a wooden bowl which he discarded as superfluous when he saw a boy drink from the hollow of his hands. "To want nothing is divine," said Socrates, the snub-nosed; "to want as little as possible is the nearest approach to the divine life." Emerson wrote of Thoreau: "He chose to be rich by making his wants few." Forsooth, an unostentatious sort of men who need not be reckoned as disputers of the spoils which are reported to lie in glittering abundance at the summit of the mountain.

One would expect such folk to be left undisturbed on their points of vantage in the same measure that they avoid disturbing the eager runners on the beaten road. For long periods they lie so motionless that they seem parts of the landscape and are mistaken for rocks or trees by the unsuspecting throng. They do not thrust themselves presumptuously upon the crowd; they do not bustle importantly into public meetings and argue from the floor; they do not seize every occasion to mount the soapbox, clear their throats and burst into a quivering torrent of rhetorical abuse. Lambs could be no less ferocious or prying. In truth, their most serious intrusions are a book or two which may be ig-

nored by leaving them unopened on the book-stands. Yet it is noticeable that if one of the passionate runners on the highway stops to fling a chance jeer at the loafer on the nearest ridge (thereby clearing his mind), his fellows soon join in the baiting. They form an irate throng, shake their fists in anger, fume and bellow as though this silent figure had maliciously slandered them. Socrates, who walked the streets of Greece harmlessly, speaking only when spoken to, a modest man, painfully conscious of his own want of learning and his own limitations, yet drew the displeasure of so petty a politician as Meletus and was condemned by a cynical assembly to the cup of hemlock. Thus conscience does make cowards of us all!

There is no startling originality in the thought that a man cannot be all things at once. Those who choose to idle away languorous hours in the cool shade, dreaming or playing the lute, cannot look forward to the rococo splendour of palaces on the summit. At best they can only suck up every drop of the present and argue that the castles do not exist. Neither can the runners on the main highway "loaf and invite their souls." Devoting all their energy and all their time to the race, for it is a close one, they must expect

to become a trifle dull—be, like the Monk's horse, "gode . . . but nat gay." Crafty as Benjamin Franklin was, sharp to drive a bargain and make all men his servants, he yet paid for the whistle without haggling over the price. As a youth he leaned respectfully towards the arts. The success of a ballad or two which he wrote in his teens enticed him towards the seductive embraces of Poesy. But when his father (whose business, be it noted, was the making of candles) warned his son that poets were beggars, Benjamin drew back with disillusioned alacrity and turned again to the mundane task of sticking type in his brother's shop. For what is fame if the money-bag droops in the chest? We see him some years later when he set up for himself in Philadelphia quite fitted to the mould, scrupulously avoiding even the appearance of idleness—"I spent no time in taverns, games or frolics of any kind"—and with a determination which savoured of stubbornness, breaking himself of "prattling, punning and jesting," which made him acceptable only to "trifling company." Indeed, this diligence and perseverance crept so far into the marrow of his bones and so thoroughly shaped his thinking, despite a sense of humour, that in due time he was able to desert his favorite thesis of deism,

when he "suspected that this doctrine, though it might be true, was not very useful"! It is only a short step from such fair-weather expediency to the abortive pastime of editing the Lord's Prayer: to altering the familiar "Our Father which art in heaven" to "Heavenly Father" because, as he wrote ingenuously, it is "more concise, equally expressive and better modern English." While reading the "Autobiography" one inevitably falls to musing over Franklin's wife, whom he scarcely mentions. Did the "twelve-pound look" ever come into her eyes?

The runners on the highway stick close together, not only in their contempt for loiterers, but also in their admiration of themselves. Insidious suggestions that the common reports (on which the race has been founded) grossly exaggerate the amount of treasure on the summit, or that the palaces after all may be nothing but tawdry pieces of architecture, give them a moment's sceptical uneasiness, but nothing more. They push on relentlessly, their faces set grim. In good time their hearts drop into their stomachs, as did Adrian Harley's, "where it was much lighter, nay, an inspiring weight, and encouraged him merrily on." Where the grade climbs steepest they whip their protesting flesh with glaring

sign-boards: "Damn your excuses! We want results." "In God we trust; all others cash." "To be good is well, to do good is better; to 'make good' is best." Refreshment booths along the way sell not sparkling wines or delicately tinted liqueurs but lithographed pamphlets whose covers scream, "You can!" Demagogues of the racing tribe who are said to have reached the top and to have strolled back altruistically to assist those still on the way lay bare in such writings the secrets of personality, memory and persistence which are said to win the race. What though a pallor renders their cheeks lifeless, though their eyes glare like those of caged lions, though they jump nervously at every noise? A time will come, they tell themselves, when they can seek their affluent ease in garrulous coffee-houses where gossip and politics pass the time pleasantly away.

Meanwhile, sheltered from the glare of the baking sun and sung to by silvery mountain streams, the loafers go on musing and dreaming. Their clothes are not dusty with the grime of the highway but fragrant with the odours of wild flowers which blossom on woodsy banks. While the contestants in the race are eternally buoying up their spirits with thoughts of the golden-paved

summits, the idlers are whistling lazy tunes, their hands clasped behind their backs, and attending to the business of humanity. They are "such honest, civil, quiet men!" They wonder whether the "You can!" books, whose gaudy lithographing they can read at long range and which teach the art of "selling oneself," do not smell somewhat of the oldest profession in the world. Efficiency they do not comprehend. Fear they know not—nor jealousy nor hysteria. Their conscience pricks them only when they lose themselves. A serious assertion such as Dudley Warner's that snow-storms "take away the sin of idleness by making it a necessity" is to them the barest buncombe. Some of them like Samuel Butler and W. N. P. Barbellion become, as years go by, self-righteous and irritated as they gaze towards the road. They heap indecencies upon the highway runners; they spit upon the throng. But some of them like George Borrow retain their sweetness through the most inclement weather, wandering wherever adventure beckons to them, their senses alert and free. Others like Anatole France keep close beside the highway without stepping boldly upon it, engage in good-humoured colloquies with those who are rushing past and avoid saying anything bitter or rankling. All

live upon such stuff as the runners are willing to sell to them, giving in exchange for pomegranates the report of what they have seen from the ridges. For the runners are eager to know who is ahead.

The idlers on the ridges whisper that some who have raced to the summit found the luxury suffocating and so at length drifted below the tree-line where vegetation flourishes. Others report that the talk there runs free only a few months before it begins to repeat, that those who have moved into the richest houses go blind from the glitter of the gold and jewels, that the very paths for casual strolling are laid in circles and the boldest promenades thus return in good time to their starting-points. The coffee-houses are described as stiff places of cold formality. They say that the muscles which grow hard during the race are soon flabby from want of exercise. Even the bright hopes which during the race fill the minds of the contestants with kaleidoscopic pictures soon die and leave them wizened blanks.

Such news is drowned by the noise of the race. A censorship has been established to keep the bearers of ill tidings from the refreshment booths where the "how to" booklets are sold. For a man cannot run well unless his heart is in the

race. Perhaps that is why the contestants brand dissenters as snobs, prigs, knaves, blackguards and braggadocios, to strengthen their own morale. After all, who knows but that they are right? Who knows but the news from the summit is hopelessly prevaricated, that the idlers are foxes after grapes, that activity is really its own reward, that "energistic teleology," as the pundits say, is more worthy than hedonism? "In the jumble of existence there must be many a shock and many a grief," writes George Santayana; "people living at cross-purposes cannot be free from malice, and they must needs be foiled by their pretentious passions. But there is no need of taking those evils tragically." Observers and contestants in the human race are prone to take such differences as tragedies. But when the heat radiates from the baking highway and bodies are weary from the race, the temper of the runners jumps on slight provocation. Meanwhile, it is cool and sweet in the woods.

* * *

*Pierre:* By Jupiter, literature is strange business!

*The Author:* Well, what now?

*Pierre:* As a general thing words are used

for the exchange of ideas, and as far as possible every one tries to speak the same language. But in literature words are used merely so the author can pirouette a little to please his own vanity. You talk of "successful failures." Well, what the hell do you mean? I know what success is, and I know what failure is; and you can't persuade me that the two mean the same or that one meaning is interchangeable with the other. Come, let us have a little sense or let us have some blank pages where we can write down a word or two of some consequence.

*The Author:* Look here, my friend, I'm sure you don't require everything to be useful.

*Pierre:* You bet I do; and why not?

*The Author:* Well, haven't you a little room in this gigantic, teeming, bubbling bean of yours for a little nonsense now and then?

*Pierre:* Sure! If it's nonsense it's useful. Well?

*The Author:* Very well. Here's a little nonsense. What are you so excited about?

*Pierre:* A little nonsense? No, my boy, no. This is not nonsense. This is what the Sunday book reviewers call "mellow" literature. This is supposed to go with mulled ale, warden pipes, beer-stained benches and immodest wenches.

Now, I can get on well enough with that sort of society, but when it gets mixed up with the æsthetic, I—

*The Author:* The nuances of art, the fragile, tenuous shades of—

*Pierre:* Blah, blah!

* * *

We put a kettle of prunes to stew over the fire and turned again to the volume of Socrates. Having read at Passaconaway Plato's account of Socrates' defence when he was on trial for not believing in the gods whom the city held sacred, but for designing to introduce other and new deities; and likewise for his having corrupted the youth, we now turned to Xenophon's defence of Socrates—less sublime in its translated style than Plato, but equally reverential. And if to the practical ears of moderns Socrates' apology before the court of five hundred and one seemed needlessly indiscreet, antagonizing and foolhardy, quite defeating the apparent purpose for which he made it, Xenophon convinced us of its true nobility—its courage, faith, its honourable consistency with the whole life of the speaker. The philosophers have several quarrels with the wisdom of Socrates; for, in truth, he was a pioneer;

and like pioneers he did not achieve perfection. But the most cynical do not find in his life or teachings, as they have come down to us, the least sign of unworthy motives. He made many enemies among the politicians and sophists—Critias, Charicles, Hippias and Protagoras. But what seeker after truth does not? The progress of human civilization rests upon more sweaty speed than by their nature the teachings of Socrates provoke. What human civilizations achieve, however, does not reflect discredit upon the relative immobility of Socrates' thought. On the contrary, his insistence upon soundness of doctrine and knowledge among the law-makers and clearness of thought among the teachers shows the penalties we pay year by year for skimming over those virtues.

In reading this panegyric of Socrates and that most human and enlivening account of "The Banquet," we were pleasantly interrupted several times: a winter wren sang fairy music; a pine grosbeak perched in the sunshine in a tree above the camp and glowed with brilliant colour. Towards the end of the afternoon a brisk wind came up from the north-west, driving away the haze which had hung around the mountains for a week. Webster being the only distant mountain in view,

it served as a measure of visibility. By five o'clock Webster was clear, dark blue. The wind was high and the temperature falling. Far into the evening we enjoyed a brisk camp-fire of split birch sticks and watched the stars flickering as they do on cold, clear evenings. By candlelight we finished reading "The Banquet" and went to bed.

More than a night went by before morning; a season passed as well. For a week summer had been making rather too much of her prerogatives, but during the night autumn burst across the mountains buoyantly and freshly. What a new world it was on Sunday morning! A vigorous wind came spanking out of the north-west, clearing the atmosphere to crystalline purity, and driving huge banks of cloud gaily along; they seemed to be just over our heads. The wind was cold against our faces as we got out of the protection of the cabin; we pulled on our sweaters and lighted the fire as quickly as possible. Indeed, a glorious morning, a spur to physical activity. For a half-hour before sunlight crept into the deep ravine where Camp Resolution is hidden, Giant Stairs loomed roseate above us. We tried the echoes in that direction. After each lusty shout they answered for six seconds, running

down the valley to a whisper from the last ridge towards Crawford Notch. So we need not merely sublimate ourselves into Nature, but we could talk to her as well. She was as polyphonic on this bright morning as an orchestra.

We did not linger over our meal longer than was necessary, for there were views to be seen on a day like this from the many openings on the Montalban Ridge, always higher, always nearer Mt. Washington. We burst up the trail with alacrity, stopping once to pull off our sweaters but not again until we had "slabbed" up the sheer slope of Giant Stairs almost to the summit. It was too windy for most of the birds; they are silent in blustering weather. But the chickadee, as Emerson knew full well, is not less cheery because the skies do not smile with warmth; and at the side path to the head of Giant Stairs we heard one in the spruce-trees. Not the familiar chickadee of southern New England, however, whom Emerson celebrated in song; his note was less vibrant and his markings less bold. He was the Hudsonian titmouse, a northern brother, who lives in spruce forests in the mountains.

From the head of Giant Stairs the view was glorious, a cyclorama indeed with the clouds whipping on and foaming from the tips of the

Franconia Mountains and from Carrigain; and almost a kaleidoscope with the variety of colours in the sky down towards the far horizon. Below us were the woods where we had spent a day in camp; Mt. Resolution rolled up and beyond. In the south the Sandwich Range, bulwark of the White Mountains, swung cleanly into the sky. Kancamagus, Osceola, Sandwich Dome, Tripyramid and Passaconaway were all clear of cloud, and the tip of Chocorua poked above Resolution. We sat down to survey the landscape through the glasses, picking out familiar details of house and road in Jackson, and following roughly our course from the Sandwich Range north by Sawyer Pond, which was hidden by intervening summits. Deer tracks, apparently two days old, recorded the visit of another climber who had ostensibly looked at this view also from the same position. We hoped that he made as much of it as we did. However, the instinct that revels in views from heights may be only a human one. "Why a wide horizon should have so great a fascination for us, wingless walkers on the level ground, is a curious question," wrote W. H. Hudson, who thought about such things. "It is not merely a childish delight in a novel sensation; I should rather look on it as a survival, like our fighting,

hunting, and various other instincts—an inherited memory of a period when the hill-top was at the same time refuge, fortress, and tower of observation from which all hidden things stood revealed—where men, losing their fear and feeling superior to their enemies, were lifted above themselves." That passage tells as much of Hudson as it tells of man—of his faith in human nature, his concern with metaphysics and his innocence of pretence. How inoffensive the phrase "feeling superior to their enemies" comes from his pen; but how malevolent and mischievous it would be in Voltaire, or Samuel Butler, or Bernard Shaw, and how ironic in Thoreau. Hudson was not one of the "hypergelasts; the excessive laughters, ever-laughing, who are as clappers of a bell, that may be rung by a breeze, a grimace." And yet he was not sluggish in humour. Such soft humour as sweetened his writing is not a social product but a natural one. The humour that scintillates, twists, parries and stings—a literary overtone—comes from walking the heights of society rather than the heights of land.

## IV

THIS was no longer the promenade begun gaspingly at Chocorua a week before. These were no longer the struggling, puffing humans who on that Sunday groaned under their packs. The change in the weather had enlivened our spirits; and the week of climbing in the mountains had toughened our shoulders and legs, and we followed the trail along the crest of the Montalban Ridge, facing the wind, in a jubilant mood. Over the crest of Giant Stairs we went, through a hollow watered by a spring and flourishing with rank weeds, through a burned area to the first of the several peaks of Mt. Davis.

A twist in the trail suddenly brought into view the southern peaks of the Mt. Washington Range. It was startling to come on them so sharply. We were now quite conscious for the first time that these were the mountains towards which we had been travelling; they are always the goal of White Mountain promenades. One may snivel if one chooses at the dominance of

the highest mountain in a range, or the largest city in a country, or the tallest mechanical structure in the world. "No other monument since the cathedrals—perhaps since the pyramids —has so stirred human sensibility as the Eiffel Tower," wrote Remy de Gourmont scornfully. "Confronted with all that junk reared on high, stupidity itself became lyric, fools meditated, wild asses dreamed." But to defy the superlative is to defy a social instinct, and to accomplish that liberation is to reach the apotheosis of cerebralism. Not that the Presidential Range is more beautiful than the Sandwich Range, or more attractive. Those southern mountains are less celebrated and are less trammelled by the mob; the camper's life there is more secluded. Nevertheless, it is toward Mt. Washington that the tourist turns obediently, the cynosure of all eyes. How many a little hill in New Hampshire and Vermont basks in the reflected glory of being a "Mt. Washington look-out"! We were now in the neighbourhood of giants.

And they were struggling with other giants, with clouds which boiled over the summits and whipped across the intervening ravine on the wings of the wind. The scene was one of such physical activity, in majestic proportions, on such

a mammoth scale that one could not be indifferent to it. As we followed the trail just under the summit-line of Mt. Davis, and always closer to the Presidentials, it was not long before we felt occasional sprays of cold mist on our faces. Here, indeed, was the war-ground of the gods whither it seemed foolhardy for mere humans to wander.

We climbed to the wind-swept dome of Mt. Davis for a broad view, one of the best in all the White Mountains. Now we could see all that was visible from Giant Stairs, and more as well —Baldface and Sable near Chatham; and far in the south beyond the Sandwich Range were several small mountains, perhaps Monadnock, Crotchet and their neighbours, invisible save on the most brilliant days. Chilled by the wind, which ran through the tiny spruces like fire in a grassy field, we soon turned back for shelter. But before we dropped down into the woods, Pierre cut one of these ankle-high trees which cover the tops of such exposed summits. A few rods from the top, in the midst of protecting woods, was an overturned spruce on which we could count the rings of yearly growth. The stump measured six inches across; the tree was fifty-nine years old. Through the microscope

Pierre examined the specimen cut on the peak. It was five-eighths of an inch thick and twenty years old. There were doubtless others on top no larger but twice as old. And the miracle is not that they grow no larger, but that they grow at all. Somewhat numb from exposure to the wind, we built a large fire beside a spring to cook luncheon and to warm ourselves. It was a jolly sight to see the pan of beans bubbling and the coffee steaming. After eating we lingered gratefully about the flames, warming our stiff fingers—at noon-time in midsummer. The date was August; the weather, however, was November.

There were three or four miles yet through wild country to Camp Isolation, where we planned to spend the night. And the afternoon was bleak and greyish, swept with gusts of rain; tatters of cloud dashed across the peaks and swirled through the trees—an afternoon of furies. Before leaving the fire we pulled on our sweaters again and put the oilskins within easy reach. Our boots sank to the tops in marshy spots along the trail, but they kept dry inside; and we held our own against the elements. Beyond the last summit of Davis the trail bent to

the left just under the top of Mt. Isolation and finally led us into a patch of burned forest.

Here was another "unfinished part of the world," or a part once finished, perhaps, but since violated, and now a natural monstrosity. It was piled with dead, twisted trees that fretted the dark sky with bleached fingers—a dismal confusion, the wilderness made wilder, the charm rubbed off, the hideous, the horrific laid on thick, an angry and truculent ruin, impossible to penetrate without trail or ax. Once upon a time man regarded all wild nature as a thing malevolent in this fashion; even now the emotion persists in such places of violence, and civilized man does not approach them with the same tranquillity with which he walks through natural forest. Between blustering weather and burned forest the Montalban Ridge had a troubled and disturbing air. Yet to the south-east, twenty miles from the high mountains, the sky was deep blue and Mt. Pequaket was bright with sunshine. As we recovered our composure somewhat by looking in that direction, as though at a Promised Land, we saw the roof of Camp Isolation glistening with moisture in the midst of a dreary tangle. We found the path to it, almost too slight a line to

follow. One muddy place in it bore the footprint of a bear; it was too much in harmony with the environment to thrill us or to seem as unusual as bear-prints are in the White Mountains. As we scraped a way into camp through the last dead thicket a cold rain began pattering on the roof. The wind whipped down the ridge, burst round a ledge at the camp doorway, and kept the fire dancing and roaring, snapping with sparks and hissing with rain. Before supper was cooked our stack of wood was exhausted; in the gathering dusk we went in search of more fuel that was not too dead and hard for burning. After supper we both put on extra woollen shirts and also the sweaters and pulled the fire up close to camp, where its warmth was not carried off by the wind.

The talk that evening was serious and pretentious, too studied to be entirely honest.

* * *

*Pierre:* Sir, what good have you done to-day?

*The Author:* Speaking quite seriously, I can think of none. I have absorbed good every moment, but I can think of none given out. It seems presumptuous to say it, but if we do any good on such a trip as this, it is indirectly, developing ourselves in the woods to be better

citizens at home. That is the best answer I can make.

*Pierre:* Your simplicity amuses me. Now if we accept Socrates' paradox that the highest knowledge is the knowledge of universal ignorance, is it not true that we have approached knowledge on this journey?

*The Author:* It seems so to me.

*Pierre:* By living in the woods, have we not learned to distinguish the transitory from the permanent, the ephemeral from the solid, better than we could before?

*The Author:* With that also I agree.

*Pierre:* Well, then, are we not at least potentially better citizens, capable of more good, than we were before?

*The Author:* How can it be otherwise?

* * *

While the wind howled and dashes of rain swept across the roof we talked with amazing profundity of the nature of good. We talked, also, of happiness—a more popular topic; and of its unfortunate alliance with the good. After so much intellectual warmth it was astonishing to find how coldly we slept that night, although we were dressed in all the clothes we had and were

buttoned tightly into blankets and ponchos. At the Summit House on Mt. Washington the temperature dropped to 31° and frosts whitened the lowlands as far south as Massachusetts, as we learned a few days later. We should have been glad of a few more civilized luxuries and superfluities that bleak night in Camp Isolation. "The philosopher is in advance of his age even in the outward form of his life," Thoreau wrote in "Walden." "He is not fed, sheltered, clothed, warmed like his contemporaries. How can a man be a philosopher and not maintain his vital heat by better methods than other men?" Clearly we were not philosophers, as we had chosen to dub ourselves. Our tepid vital heat betrayed our mongrel breed.

* * *

*Pierre:* For God's sake, why must you always quote Thoreau? Haven't you outdoor poltroons any other deities? Didn't any one else ever say anything that seemed wise?

*The Author:* Yes, many others have seemed wise, Pierre. But of the out-of-doors no one else has been really so profoundly wise. Thoreau expressed nature because even in his most classi-

cal lucubrations he was no more than a part of nature.

* * *

Thoreau alluded to Parnassus as casually as he talked of Fairhaven Hill; and even Cambridge, where the Muses then were lisping in unimpassioned numbers, was no nearer to Walden Pond than the Castalian spring. He climbed Wachusett, Monadnock, Graylock, Washington, and even ventured to the summit of Ktaadn when that region was a pathless forest; but, alas! he caught only fleeting glimpses of the snowy Parnassian summit as he struggled among the fir-trees on the upper slopes. Thoreau's disciples hotly resist a vulgar suspicion that their god sat on his pedestal less squarely than Locke, Bacon, or perchance Diogenes. They conceive him—not extravagantly—in heroic proportions. But if the testimony of his less imaginative contemporaries may be accepted, and if the grit, sand, and sharp edges of his style indicate the man, he was indeed an awkward, clumsy, gauche, blunt fellow who loved the singing of the wind in telegraph wires but could not match it in his writing. Melville and Hawthorne were stylists; there was a classi-

cal purity in Lowell's prose, and urbanity in the essays of Holmes. Thoreau had skill and vitality, but as Mrs. Hawthorne remarked with disdain of his skating on the Concord River, his curves showed little grace.

One likes him so. There is the smell of New England earth in Thoreau's style, and occasional reflections of placid ponds. It is wild. It is as real as nature, and as imperfect, as prodigal, as varied. Like the wild apple-trees of which he wrote in the *Atlantic,* it is gnarled, knotty, tough; it blunts the edge of the ax and bends the teeth of the saw; and on the hearth it glows with sustained heat. It does not smack of the perfunctory, cataloguing literary quality which genteel outdoor literature so often possesses.

Considering the nature of the man and the quality of his experience, it is not strange that Thoreau's best-written book came first, and his best thought-out work came last; for, as his philosophy ripened, his literary style toughened. Perhaps the pedantic exhortations of Professor Goodwin were still ringing in his ears when at the age of twenty-two he returned from the voyage on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers, and during the next ten years, while he worked and reworked over "The Week"—a book for all

the world like his own Musketaquid in April, swollen, flooding meadows and woodlots, opening into bays and deep lagoons which conceal its course, and withal quite innocent of current. What a book for matter-of-fact Occidentals! Even now, after years of criticism and rodomontade, it defies a single reading. Thoreau never wrote more felicitously, more divinely. The summit of Parnassus is but little higher up. Pages of it are among the best American literature, despite the fact that the sentences, like most of Thoreau's sentences, are seldom finely turned. Like the home-made craft in which he made the voyage, they are well freighted and remain right side up, carrying their cargo safely to port through heavy seas and by roundabout routes; but, as he observed of that rude craft, they are not as light-winged as the waterfowl. Yet it was in those pages that he unburdened his heart of "Friendship," in smoothly joined sentences. There, for once, the meaning runs over from period to period with sufficient swiftness to keep the whole buoyant. The art of sentence structure, like the gentleness and sentiment of that essay, escaped him as the years passed by; or perhaps he consciously avoided it: in "The Week" he complains of literary men who write in a suc-

culent style, so that "their long, stringy, slimy sentences are of that consistency that they naturally flow and run together." At any rate, in "Walden" the sentences bear no more plastic relation to one another than do the stones of the cairn which now marks the site of Thoreau's hut.

Margaret Fuller complained that in Thoreau "truth is seen too much in detail," and Horace Greeley remarked of his Canadian essay that "the cities are described to death"—a journalistic criticism of eighty years ago, when writing had less need of compression than it has to-day. Indeed, Thoreau did traffic in so much detail that in "The Week" he had no room for half the incidents, sights and sounds which that fortnight away from Concord yielded him. One might as logically condemn Meredith for the wealth of allusion in "An Essay on Comedy"; for Thoreau was no sophisticated, bored traveller, whirling round the world in the belly of the iron horse and seeing only one new thing a day. The world smiled fresh for him and was constantly surprising him with its novelty. With the natural phenomena within the bounds of Concord he was familiar. But outside the village gates lived barbarians. Six miles up the Sudbury from Concord he discovered strange, almost foreign men,

"Nine-Acre-Corner men" and "Wayland men"; and when he walked twenty miles toward Wachusett he found that the towns already had a certain Western look. No wonder that for him Quebec and Montreal bristled with detail which the jaded eye of the hardened traveller would have dismissed as commonplace. The wonder is that two years at Walden did not burst the covers of that volume and that the sentences had in that compass sufficient room to unfold and form their columns. But in these days when magazine articles and novels, to say nothing of newspaper articles, are unceremoniously lopped off to fit the Procrustean beds of contemporary journals, shall we begrudge one man the space to go over his world with a microscope? Who knows how much the rest of us have missed?

Simple narration defied Thoreau as it has defied more supple pens. Recounting with far too conscientious detail a series of trifling events, he seems as far removed from the reader as his Hindu mysticism. Such an essay as "A Winter Walk" would be almost sophomoric, were it not for the strength of its verbs. But the makers of college text-books have all paid tribute to his genius for description. Here his mastery of detail rises to its highest uses. For Thoreau main-

tained such faithful vigilance over every aspect of the out-of-doors in all seasons—the number of birds, flowers and trees; the variety of subtle effects of haze, cloud, brilliant sunshine; the procession of autumnal tints; the illusion that comes from looking through water and ice; the characteristic smells of swamps and beech woods—that his descriptive writing is as fragrant and pungent as a hemlock pillow. He does not obtrude between the fields and the printed page. The shadow of his gaunt form, which cuts grotesque capers on the pages of his reflections, here falls behind the writing-desk. His pantheism glorifies the woods as the nature-writing of romanticism glorifies humanity. Who is so phlegmatic that he is insensitive to the description of Walden Pond in September? Who is so dull that the image of Cape Cod, once seen through Thoreau's eyes, can ever fade from his memory?

Many of those who, reading "Walden" for the first time, are amazed and indignant at its social blasphemy, fail to discover the comic spirit that lurked behind the "celestial homespun" of Thoreau's style. His essay on "Economy" would be very dull reading indeed were it not for its many comic figures of speech. The comedy of civilization, as well as the tragedy, was

visible from the vernal turrets on the shores of Walden Pond. Indeed, sometimes the comedy and tragedy were mingled:

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming-tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. . . . How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and woodlot!

Thoreau always spoke in terms of the visible, the concrete, the familiar.

Hardly a man takes a half-hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half-hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed.

"The fact you tell is of no value," said Emerson, "but only the impression."

One is disposed to regard Thoreau's strange propensity for puns and plays on words as no more flattering to him than would be a secret

love of mulled ale to a prohibitionist. So severe and austere a writer had no business to deal with elephantine touch in such bastard humour. Describing the wide-tired wheels used over the sandy roads of Cape Cod he says: "The more tired the wheels, the less tired the horses!" Of some twenty new towns in Maine he says: ". . . not one of which, however, is on my General Atlas, published, alas! in 1824. . . . The earth must have been considerable lighter to the shoulders of General Atlas then!" "However, as for Sandwich, I cannot speak particularly," he wrote in "Cape Cod." "Ours was but half a Sandwich at most, and that must have fallen on the buttered side some time." He even goes out of his plodding way to comment on the "trite" hull of the steamer *Amphitrite.* The occasional buffoonery in "Cape Cod" better becomes him, as, for instance, his slapstick passage on the Sandwich stage:

> This coach was an exceedingly narrow one, but as there was a slight spherical excess over two on a seat, the driver waited until nine passengers had got in, without taking the measure of any of them, and then shut the door after two or three ineffectual slams, as if the fault were all in the hinges or the latch, while we timed our inspirations and expirations so as to assist him.

What this sentence promises is no doubt greater than what it yields, but at least it serves to remove Thoreau from the company of sour nose-thumbers at society. The poet-naturalist could not trip lightly across the slack wire of scintillant jest, but he was not too pompous or self-conscious to try.

With sardonic humour, strange as it may seem, he had better fortune. Both the matter and the manner lay within his grasp; the matter because his life of introspection and impersonal analysis had taught him the absurdity of human vanity and human pretence; the manner, because he had nothing at stake. Contentious as his essay on "Economy" is, it is never belligerent. Thoreau stuck no feather in his cap because he had answered, to his own satisfaction, the perennial question of "how to live," and he was not beating his drum for converts. There was no bitterness in his stoic breast, and although he could sharpen his darts to a keen point, he did not poison the barb. "Think of fifteen argand lamps to read the newspaper by!" he exclaims slyly in his account of light-house keeping on Cape Cod. "Government oil!—light enough, perchance, to read the Constitution by!"

Mystic, transcendentalist, writer of a many-

volumned journal, Thoreau did not write for the mob. Clarity was not his supreme virtue. The mystic import of the passage in "Walden" concerning the loss of "a hound, a bay horse, and turtledove" has never been explained; he refused to explain it himself. Let it be so; only dull-witted fellows want their literature, like their bank-accounts, in simple figures. Naked sentences do not stir the imagination. Thoreau's mind, like that of a truant schoolboy, was ever running from the actual to the imaginative. On the mountain summits, especially, he could not view the landscape without summoning in classic array the gods of Greek and Oriental lore. Concerning Wachusett he ventured: "Who knows but this hill may one day be a Helvellyn, or even a Parnassus, and the Muses haunt here, and other Homers frequent the neighbouring plain?" Seated alone on the summit of Ktaadn among the clouds, he looked back over the centuries more vividly than his comrades on the slopes below him could look back over an uncomfortable night in the woods:

> Occasionally, when the windy columns broke in to me, I caught sight of a dark, damp crag to the right or left; the mist driving ceaselessly between it and me. It re-

minded me of the creations of the old epic and dramatic poets, of Atlas, Vulcan, the Cyclops, and Prometheus. Such was Caucasus and the rock where Prometheus was bound. Æschylus had no doubt visited such scenery as this. It was vast, titanic, and such as man never inhabits.

Even his literary criticism, which he struggled ineffectually to keep impersonal, carried him far from mere books and authors. Thoreau was neither content nor able merely to set down dates and titles of books, describe the qualities of the authors, and lend weight to his review by pedantic citations. There was no pedantry in him, only philosophy; no scholarship, only learning. There was always Sheik Sadi of Shiraz beckoning him across the Atlantic and Europe to the philosophical richness of the Orient. So, in considering the writings of Carlyle, that divinity of transcendentalism, Thoreau must needs dip his tin cup into the springs of his Hindu philosophy, and intoxicated by that draft, mix his figures of speech with Oriental extravagance. What meaning has the following passage on Carlyle?

Many have tasted of this well with an odd suspicion, as if it were some Arethuse which had flowed under the sea from Germany, as if the materials of his books had lain in some garret there, in danger of being ap-

propriated for waste-paper. Over what German ocean, from what Hercynian forest, he has been imported, piecemeal, into England, or whether he has now arrived, we are not informed. This article is not invoiced in Hamburg, nor in London. Perhaps it was contraband. However, we suspect that this sort of goods cannot be imported in this way. No matter how skilful the stevedore, all things being got into sailing trim, wait for Sunday, and aft wind, and then weigh anchor, and run up the main-sheet—straightway what of transcendent and permanent value is there resists the aft wind, and will doggedly stay behind that Sunday—it does not travel Sundays; while biscuit and pork make headway, and sailors cry heave-yo! It must part company, if it open a seam. It is not quite safe to send out a venture in this kind, unless yourself go supercargo. Where a man goes, there he is; but the slightest virtue is immovable—it is real estate, not personal; who would keep it must consent to be bought and sold with it.

Thoreau's style did not spring full-armed from his own austere forehead. It was a glorious compound of the forty-four volumes of Hindu literature which Cholmondeley sent him from London; of Tasso, Ovid, Pindar, Euripides, Shattuck's "History of Concord," Hayward's "New England Gazetteer," Plutarch's "Lives," Smyth's "Algebra," Atkinson's "Epitome of the Art of Navigation"; of Locke, Whately, Emer-

son, and other sober volumes in his library; all strained carefully through the Concord microcosm. At once rude and classical, provincial and universal, ingenuous and sophisticated, his own style draws Thoreau in sharper strokes and more economically, with less use of the rocker, than Sanborn's amorphous volume. Thoreau climbed no higher than the tree-line on Parnassus; but he had learned the names of the gods, knew by common report their individual attributes, and believed steadfastly in their divinity.

* * *

During the night the clouds lifted above Isolation and the Montalban Ridge, but did not disappear. On Monday morning they were still billowing majestically from the unseen summit of Mt. Washington. At five o'clock the rising sun turned their white masses to a burnished copper colour; by contrast the Montalban Ridge was a dismal, wet, gloomy patch of dead forest. At last the sun reddened the top of the ridge and creeping gradually down the slope kindled the woods as it progressed and shone merrily between the logs of the camp. Still shivering, we emerged from our blankets and walked behind the camp where the sun was warm. If nature ever seems

inanimate it is not on such a morning as this. The clouds and the trees were in motion. The sun sparkled on bright rocks on Rocky Branch ridge. At the end of the long valley Pequaket stood sharp and clear, rosy with light. Not a suspicion of haze coloured the air. Our breath steamed as on a winter's day. Indeed, the world never seemed fresher or more real. We flung our blankets over the roof to dry; and while we warmed ourselves at the fire and over a pot of hot coffee, we wondered how low the clouds hung on Mt. Washington. Would there be a view? Or would a storm on the summit make climbing foolhardy?

When Rastignac beheld for the first time the towers of Paris he shook his fist and exclaimed, *"A nous deux, maintenant!"* It was a defiance well in keeping with his career. Before the granite towers of Mt. Washington, however, we did not simmer with defiance, perhaps because the conquest would be less a matter of wit than of strength in which the advantage was scarcely with us. On this day, if all went well, we should stand on the top of New England; we should look down on summits which in themselves had seemed sufficiently difficult during the past eight days.

"I had reached the end of my journey," wrote

Jacques Balmat of his impression on reaching the summit of Mont Blanc. "I had come to a place where no one—where neither the eagle nor the chamois—had ever been before me. I had got there alone, without other help than that of my own will. Everything that surrounded me seemed to be my own property. I was the King of Mont Blanc—the statue of this tremendous pedestal." Ah, that was a mountain indeed, and a moment, too—a first climb—when the writer may well aspire to rhetorical grandiloquence and shoot words into the literary air madly. But we should have our little thrill also on Mt. Washington in the humble Appalachian Range. Emotion is not reckoned in numbers of feet. The top of a mountain anywhere brings the same satisfaction. "In every landscape," Emerson wrote, "the point of astonishment is the meeting of the sky and earth, and that is seen from the first hillock as well as from the top of the Alleghenies."

* * *

*Pierre:* I beg your pardon, but have you ever climbed Mont Blanc?

*The Author:* Why no, not exactly.

*Pierre:* Not exactly! What do you mean?

Have you been on the top of Mont Blanc, or have you not? Answer yes or no.

*The Author:* No, I have never been on the top of Mont Blanc—not exactly.

*Pierre:* Merciful Providence! Stop this bastardly qualification. If you have never been on the summit of Mont Blanc, it is clear to me that you have never been on the summit of Mont Blanc. "Not exactly!" What do you mean?

*The Author:* Why, I mean, old fellow, I have never been on the summit of Mont Blanc, but I have been on the summits of Chocorua and Whiteface and Passaconaway, and for that matter on the summit of the Görnergrat three times, and practically on the summit of the Matterhorn. A few feet more or less makes little difference.

*Pierre:* To a dull person like myself the difference between being on the summit of Mont Blanc and not being exactly on the summit of Mont Blanc is nothing more nor less than the difference beween being on the summit of Mont Blanc and not being on the summit of Mont Blanc. All else is hypocrisy and pretence—or literature, which is much the same thing. A certain Dr. Cook once got into trouble because he said he climbed to the top of Mt. McKinley, although he didn't; that is, not exactly. Well, it turns out that he was not

much of an explorer, but still a fust-class lit'ry feller.

* * *

We rolled up our blankets when they had been sufficiently dried and warmed by the sun, struggled into the straps of our packs, and started up the trail over the last two summits of Isolation for the first view of the Presidential Range. It was another brisk day, fine for climbing, the whole world sparkling and vibrant—that being our own mood. The trail climbed a little, twisted through a dismal, vexed patch of woods, and then thrust us on a shelf before which the mountain giants were seated in a clumsy circle. One does not burst in upon their council with complete equanimity; here the rhythms of life move at a higher pitch, and mere humans must readjust themselves, wriggle out of their puny selves, cast off the slough of workaday existence, reorient themselves, take new bearings and prepare for bigger things. It is a large order. We dropped the packs and strained to add a cubit to our stature; there is room enough above for expansion.

To the north, and at our feet, a ravine fell away sharply to the bed of a river; beyond that the Presidentials rose to loftier heights where

wind, weather, cloud and bare summits created another world. It was, indeed, a magnificent spectacle of green, unbending forest, sharp rocks, an occasional foaming cascade, and hurrying cloud. The lines from valley to peak and from peak to peak were on a vast scale, daring achievements of super-artistry, the gestures of a dazzling imagination. Clinton, the lowest of the range, was clear. Boott Spur was alternately clear and murky. But Washington, Monroe, Franklin and Pleasant were hidden in the clouds whither the curious must climb to see them. We ran down to the valley and started up the Boott Spur trail more discreetly, gradually leaving the thick forest and emerging into wind, cold from the clouds and summits. On the first bit of exposed ridge the wind was a gale. We took shelter long enough to put on the extra woollen shirts and to tie our hats with cord to the packs; then on once more against the buffeting gale which blew us out of the trail at times and played rude pranks with the human centre of gravity. Now and then we sought shelter behind the huge boulders which sprinkle the Boott Spur mountain side, and smoked at ease while the wind whistled at our backs. Not a vestige of haze tempered the horizon; the view was tremendous in scope, everything

clear, one of the wonders which occur in the mountains, but rarely. Like the Presidentials, the Franconia mountains were mostly in cloud. But just south of them Camel's Hump was clear, many miles away in Vermont; and the vast stretch of far country south of the Sandwich Range and the Ossipees was graphic in detail. As we climbed higher, Carter Dome worked clear of cloud. To the west the peaks of Pleasant, Franklin and Monroe blew clear; only the lofty cone of Washington was now hidden. And as we approached the tip of Boott Spur (5,520 feet), Washington appeared, first with alternating snatches of visibility and flying cloud, at last completely free. Only 700 feet above Boott Spur and less than a mile away as the crow flies were the Summit House, the queer little cars of the Mt. Washington Railroad, and a black throng of tourists. It was a shock to see so many of them and to know that most had come by train or motor car, by the same agencies, in fine, by which they pass through the world all their days. So this was not another world after all, not the home of the gods, nor of giants either; but the stopping-place of a titillated mob, the chance for a new thrill, purchased, like all thrills, with specie.

The summit was an hour's climb from the crest

of Boott Spur where we were standing and gazing. It would be no arduous task to climb those few hundred feet to the top of New England and no unprecedented venture then to imagine ourselves "the statues of this tremendous pedestal." But our ardour had now cooled; the whole promenade was endangered by aliens, by barbarians from a strange land. Down behind the summit crags we were protected from the wind and warmed by the sun. We munched chocolate and smoked leisurely. Higher than any of the mountains to the south and east, we could look over the Carter-Moriah Range, over Baldface and Sable; perhaps the flat, blue area most distant in the south-east was Portland Harbour, which is said to be visible from Washington on clear days. How many mountains, hills, ponds, roads, villages can be seen from Boott Spur on a clear day? What a wealth of natural beauty! And yet how large a place does it hold, not in the world, but in the whole universe? The variety of colours ran from the greenish blue, or perhaps blueish green, of Carter to the pure blue of the most distant hills. By some sort of optical illusion every range seemed outlined with a dark-blue line. And the cloud effects were extraordinary in variety, in pageantry, sending a pro-

cession of shadows and sunlit spots across Carter. According to their distances away, the different parades seemed to move at different speeds. Those overhead swept by at express-train speed; those farthest away were almost still. It was all extraordinarily beautiful, too much so, almost—more than we could assimilate and hold; and an indication of how much mystery behind it, what divine or pagan forces? "What can be expressed in words," said Thoreau, "can be expressed in life." The converse is never true.

We were far too comfortable to move; a warm lethargy crept over us agreeably. Pierre dipped into his pack for Socrates and began to read at random. As chance would have it he hit on a dialogue between Socrates and Euthydemus on the definition of beauty. "And can we define the beautiful in any other way than if you term whatever is beautiful—whether a person, or a vase, or anything else whatsoever—beautiful for whatever purpose you know that it is beautiful?" asked Socrates with confusing simplicity. "No, indeed," said Euthydemus, the simple-minded. "For whatever purpose, then, anything may be useful, for that purpose it is beautiful to use it?" "Certainly." "And is anything beautiful for

any other purpose than that for which it is beautiful to use it?" "For no other purpose," Euthydemus replied. "What is useful is beautiful, therefore, for that purpose for which it is useful?" "So I think," said he, no doubt in a vigorous tone of finality.

Then we fell to discussing the beauty of forests and mountains, but in truth we could not apply Socrates' definition with much satisfaction. If beauty consists in usefulness, one must determine for what uses these mountains and forests are best suited. And of what use are they, save as grist for the lumberman? What of the mountains after they have been stripped of their timber? Are they still beautiful, or has their beauty vanished? Perhaps Socrates, who lived in a country whose natural beauty is by no means insignificant, would not be stumped to reconcile natural beauty with his all-embracing test of usefulness on the score of spiritual values. However, we were reminded that all his followers did not agree with his proffers of wisdom. For when at the banquet Socrates had contended that his features were the most beautiful in the room because the most useful—his flat nose with wide, upturned nostrils being especially well formed for smelling, and his thick and large lips giving his

kisses an especially fine quality of sweetness and lusciousness—the company all voted against him. In the prospect from Boott Spur we could see no beauty easily adaptable to Socrates' definition. Perhaps Socrates was wrong; perhaps the fulminating Théophile Gautier was more nearly right in the preface to "Mademoiselle de Maupin": "There is nothing truly beautiful but that which can never be of any use whatsoever; everything useful is ugly, for it is the expression of some need, and man's needs are ignoble and disgusting like his own poor and infirm nature. The most useful place in a house is the water-closet." And, of course, Alciphron's courtesan, an early pragmatist, did not ignore the truth from her point of view when she remarked that Socrates was less useful than Pericles' mistress.

We should have enjoyed lingering on such a vantage-point as the sheltered crest of Boott Spur, monarchs in our own right of a vast domain; but several mundane affairs of life urged us on. The store of food had been dwindling in an alarming fashion; we had no more oatmeal, pancake-flour, coffee, baked beans, bacon or sugar. In Pinkham Notch at the foot of the mountain we knew of a camp where all such things might be had; and towards noon we began picking a way cautiously

down the precipitous southern face of Boott Spur, over loose and treacherous rocks which have tumbled from the summit of the ridge. It was an exhilarating place, Tuckerman Ravine falling away at a rapid angle on the left, the majestic cone of Washington flung skywards beyond. From the tree-line the Boott Spur trail slips into Tuckerman Ravine with a sheer grade which makes descending a sport and climbing a sore achievement. Soon we left the parapets far above and swung rapidly towards the river, checking speed by clutching the trees along the way. We were almost down when we heard voices—the first human sounds in three days. It is said that when Livingstone was found in Africa he did not rejoice at the prospect of returning to civilization. After three days on the Montalban Ridge neither were we prepared to simmer down again to the tepid warmth of "good society," to descend from self-imposed adventure to the ignoble level of touring. The voices were those of three climbers who were hurrying to the summit via Boott Spur in order to be down again before evening. They had come by automobile that morning from Lake Winnepesaukee, whither they must return the same day. The commuter's life is a prolonged abortion.

We kept on down the trail, across the river and up a few rods towards Tuckerman Ravine to a U.S. Forest Reserve shelter near Hermit Lake. Another party of campers had left their equipment there, but without knowing their number we decided that two more would not cramp the sleeping-space, however much it might cramp our insolent style. After luncheon we emptied one pack and set out down the trail to Pinkham Notch for provisions, two miles below. Free of the packs, we raced along at a good pace and passed several groups of tourists who had come down from the summit and who not unreasonably resented our speed. But judging by our usual pace we had little time to spare if we were to be back in camp before nightfall, and we had a real respect for climbing back with a full load. The Pinkham Notch lodge supplied us with all the food we needed; the empty pack was now quite full and heavy. In climbing up the mountain to camp the plan was for each man to carry the pack ten minutes by the watch and then climb unburdened ten minutes more while his companion strained under the shoulder straps. And we would climb as briskly as possible until we were exhausted; then rest and get under way once more. But how absurdly we had underestimated our strength. We

tore up the trail rapidly, passing again most of those whom we had passed coming down, and were back in camp in forty minutes with evening still almost two hours away. There was a keen satisfaction about all that, but an entirely false economy. Abstract temperance is in no wise a virtue; temperance in speed, however, is the high wisdom of human life.

The other campers were three young lads from Salem who had never been in the woods or mountains before. They had read of the joys and freedoms of camping-life and had come north to embrace them ardently. Alas! they were ill-prepared by equipment and experience, had difficulty in building fires, insisted upon undressing when they went to bed and as a result shivered the cold night through. Their low shoes, skull-caps and blazing neckties gave them a gay appearance which belied the success of their adventure. The potatoes they carried made their packs unbearably heavy; the sardines and canned clam chowder proved monotonous diet, while the eggs were no more satisfying. We ventured ironically that "camping is a great life," to which they assented in unison—laconically. After supper they crept into a warm corner of the camp, played cards, and sang popular songs in what

is known as "close harmony," much practised on soft spring evenings on college campuses in America. The night grew chilly as the cold air on the Mt. Washington summit slipped down to the floor of the Ravine. We took off our boots but put on all the clothes we had, buttoned up tightly and rolled inside our blankets. The Salem adventurers undressed, obedient to arbitrary rules of hygiene and sanitation. They shivered as the night grew chilly. Our barbarous night-clothing kept us unclean and thoroughly comfortable. Camping in the mountains and strolling by day near the city are not to be confused so lightly.

* * *

I had been reading George Moore's "Memoirs of My Dead Life" all evening, a book warm with the colours of the sunset, a beautiful book and a pagan, and I did not like to close it with some hundred pages still unread. But Edgar and I were to walk in the country the next morning; and I am not one of those who can make shift with a few hours of sleep. Cæsar and Napoleon adjusted their sleep to circumstances; they were trafficking, however, in empires. So at length with a feeling not unlike martyrdom I put down

the book and prepared for bed, for that ultimate of a well-spent day—an ultimate, too, which can be put off by many agreeable subterfuges, running over the backs of the books, taking a turn in the magazines, knocking the ashes out of a pipe, or what not. "I forget who it was," writes Somerset Maugham, "that recommended men for their soul's good to do each day two things they disliked: it was a wise man, and it is a precept that I have followed scrupulously; for every day I have got up and I have gone to bed." But why run on about such matters? Why, indeed, save that they are the most immediate in life?

At any rate, my mental alarm-clock woke me at seven the next morning and by the time the chimes in a near-by steeple were ringing their first quarter-hour, their regular signal that Day is fast under way, I was stirring with alacrity. My top-floor flat has advantages peculiar to its kind, but the brick walls of tall loft buildings on all three sides conceal the sky (except for one irregularly and closely framed patch), and I could tell nothing definite about the weather. When I got into the street, however, such fragments of sky as are visible in the midst of the city were cold, and the sun was winking through greyish clouds. I turned up Madison Avenue. And yet was it

that? I pass up and down there frequently, but seldom at quarter to eight of a Sunday morning when policemen are yawning, janitors are flushing the pavements from the hose or loitering on the street corners. It all seemed unbelievably fresh.

It was later than I had thought by the big clock on the Grand Central Terminal, and I had time only to buy my ticket to Croton and swallow a cup of coffee before the gateman cried the last warning. Edgar was waiting, somewhat anxiously, just outside the last car, and we were hardly in our seats before the train started. He was clad in plus-fours, a tweed jacket, a cap to match, and carried a heavy German thorn walking-stick.

It is curious how meagrely friends know one another and how strange they seem outside their normal habitat. Here was Edgar, an old friend, but in this get-up a new man to me; and I suppose he felt much the same toward me. For although we are good friends indeed and pass the time of day pleasantly enough at the office, sharing certain quaint opinions which we hold stoutly against the jesting ridicule and sardonicisms of other workers at adjacent desks—in spite of this sort of alliance, we were now making our first excursion into the country together. Instinctively, I

fancy, we became apologetic; each wanted to discover the old Adam beneath these exotic habiliments.

Edgar apologized for wearing a starched collar; I explained that my flannel shirt had come cheap from an obscure shop. Edgar related the story of his stick, which I admired greatly.

"A medical student gave it to me," he said, "and some years ago I carried it during a walking-trip through France."

And surely it was a stick to be admired, polished and rough and in no sense a fop's bauble. It gave out a sound like iron, and would be a dangerous weapon for thumping.

A gentle blue autumnal haze hung lazily over the Hudson River, softening the Palisades on the further side, blurring their maze of Gothic spires. On clear days they bristle as defiantly as a fortress; they rise across the river like mighty battlements. Now they were things of mediæval beauty. Rare ornament of a heedless city!

We were not the only excursionists, though perhaps the only ambulatory ones. Two young fellows in the seat before us had lunch-bags with them, and shot-guns in leather cases. Golfers and their bags rattling with golf-clubs were in nearly every other seat, and may be said to have

packed this Sunday morning meeting. But except for the two fellows with shot-guns it was a sober gathering of New York citizens, perhaps too early in the morning for those of higher spirits. Across the aisle were four olive-skinned people, one a woman with strong, white teeth. They were French Canadians, bound for richer country than the city affords. Within the city limits they held their peace and we scarcely noticed them, but as the train rolled out into the country and the view opened up from the car windows their conversation grew animated; as though bound for Canada, they already felt their hearts quickening, away from tall buildings which hide the sky, and noisy traffic which deafens the ear. We listened to their patois without catching a word of it. How monstrous and cramped New York City must seem to them; how depressing it must be to those who, like French Canadians, languish when they are away from home. *"Dans tout ce pays-ci,"* sighed the contented Chapdelaines in their small house in Péribonka, *"nous sommes chez nous . . . chez nous!"*

At Croton I sought out a drug-store for sweet chocolate to repair my scanty breakfast, for only the sallow smoke on an empty stomach; and Edgar laid in two cigars against the hour when the lunch-

box would be empty. Crotoners were walking home with Sunday newspapers, tinkering with automobiles, raking leaves, and three of the laziest were sitting in the sun on a grocery-store porch, swearing in an unimaginative fashion. We were soon striding up the road, a smooth rhythm of legs, arms and walking-sticks, a pace well calculated to cover distance without bringing exhaustion. In walking, as in life, exhaustion comes by breaking rhythm, by shortening or lengthening the step beyond its natural stride. And the closest friendships, likewise, are between those whose stride naturally covers the same distance.

At last, after all this confusion and preparation, we were in the country, and we began to look round curiously, as though we were in a foreign land. Trees hold an especial charm for Edgar; he has thought about them introspectively. One Monday morning last spring at the first flush of the season he walked into the office smiling. "I saw a *tree* yesterday," he said. The rest of us were puzzled and perhaps a little busy at our desks. Edgar tried again: "I *saw* a tree yesterday." It seems he *"saw a tree,"* which is as different from "seeing a tree" as reading words is from reading ideas. As we walked up the Peekskill road this autumn morning he was *seeing trees*

again, with an understanding which did not come out until later.

We turned off the main road, as hard and definite an affair as the motor cars which roar over it, and ascended a hill by a winding bridle-path, through a grove of pines and hemlocks where chickadees were busy about their gastronomical affairs. Here Edgar began to get his fill of trees. I, too, was fairly bursting with an absurd sort of ecstasy which comes from having steeped too long in the city; I felt like bawling aloud some panegyric of this seasonal beauty, as though Edgar had not perceived it. But he was conscious of it too. Conscious? Nay, rather swung up by it off this too, too solid earth. In fact we were both distinctly "heady." And so we merely smiled at one another sympathetically and kept on up the hill without speaking a word. "Is not this wild rose sweet without comment?" Hazlitt inquired. "Does not this daisy leap to my heart, set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon?"

The blaze of the autumn colours ran rapidly through all the tree tops as far as we could see from the hill-side, scarlet on chestnuts, flaky orange on the apples, yellow on the birches. Nature is modest in this latitude and climate, but in the autumn, as a sort of grand finale, she splashes the stage with colour. We scuffed through windrows of crisp ash leaves, smelling their clean odour, and turned up a soft lane where juncos were flitting and twittering in the grass and two downy woodpeckers scratching in an apple-tree. Suddenly we walked into a hill-side field, etched round with a thin line of trees. One oak stood, a true symbol of strength, in the centre. Sumachs on one side glowed with a vivid colour, and down the valley to the next hill, washed with the faint blue of the haze, were innumerable patches of colour in glorious array. "Not even Fifth Avenue on Saturday afternoon—" I started to say, but stopped with a sense of absurdity. That sort of commonplace remark does not satisfy Edgar; it is at once too obvious and specious; it is truly a "striving after wind." He professes to enjoy walks on city streets, much as he enjoys walks through the country, and for very similar reasons. For Edgar is a barefaced Emersonian and agrees that "If we consider how much we

are nature's, we need not be superstitious about towns, as if that terrific or benefic force did not find us there also, and fashion cities."

The lane now dipped downhill through a heavily wooded patch. Juncos and woodpeckers were busy in here also, and some other birds with a throaty, crooning note. We did not recognize them instantly as bluebirds; they seemed too unlike the same birds of the spring. High in the sky were two hawks soaring easily with scarcely a wing motion. Too far away for us to identify positively, they were supposedly red-tailed hawks, said to be common to this country. The lane stopped at a stone wall on the edge of a grassy pasture. "Look!" cried Edgar as I clambered over the wall. I turned quickly and saw a procession of small grey birches well up towards the hill-top, a far sweep of newly-minted gold. So came the riches of nature at the close of a well-spent season.

It would be tedious to record all we saw, how we came out to a bit of road, climbed a hill through a farm-yard, sprawled on the grass and considered the view of these many hills where the glacier stopped. But the temptation is strong, for the memory retains so many things; facts about birds and trees, rail fences, dips and twists

in the path, a view of a pond shimmering through bare branches, a muddy hole where prints of men and of dogs and an empty shot-gun shell told their own story; the sound of breeze through beech-trees to which dry leaves were still clinging, fallen logs, a brook, a spring. But we must keep some things to ourselves. We must have some secrets from the reader, as he has many from us.

By noon we were on the shore of Croton Lake, a great stretch of water with shores of meadow land and wooded points.

"In ten minutes," I said to Edgar flippantly, "we shall be on a point where we can see the whole lake. When we get there and sit down you are hereby required to discourse on the idea of lakes. What do they mean? What makes them what they are to us?"

Edgar glanced up in his querulous fashion and we walked on silently through the woods, over a fallen tree and on to a parapet above the water. The far shore of the lake was lost in the haze. Tiny waves lapped noisily at our feet.

"As it happens," Edgar began shyly, "I was thinking of just that when you spoke, of the meaning of lakes and ponds. Everything in nature has a meaning. Swedenborg pursued that thought far and arrived at some conclusions.

Trees, he said, were perception—the branches and roots running out in all directions and the tops lifting up as far as they can. I thought a good deal about lakes this summer when I was camping on the shore of a large one. After several days the idea of lakes began to get me; I began to understand that there was something about them different from anything else, something that is a lake. But I don't know what it is. These things take time and require discipline. It would be a great thing to come out of the city and free the mind immediately. But it all takes time. I never read much of Thoreau, but I get this from him—a certain expectancy, expectancy. No man knoweth at what hour his life may come. He was always waiting for the moment when suddenly and without warning the secret to everything might be confided. And so it is with every one. We can only live in hope."

With a natural modesty, Edgar imagined he had not answered my question. But heaven save the mark! The feeble question I had jestingly propounded now became a cosmic problem, a thought with innumerable ramifications, a thesis for scholars, a challenge to mystics, a hard nut for the gods to crack. It was as though I had asked for a stone and had been given a loaf of

bread. In the dusty bypaths of human life there still linger some who take their comrades seriously and flatter them by imagining the best. Of that generous company Edgar is well up towards the head, and quite unconscious of his leadership.

The lunch-hour approached and we were in no mood for putting it off. A mile or more to the north, over the edge of Salt Hill, was a spring where we might drink as we ate. We hastened in that direction, down a vague uncertain lane with many alluring bypaths and up Salt Hill to a parting of the ways. Once several months before I had lost my way here, had yielded to that strange temptation of the amateur woodsman to go the way he feels sure to be wrong. The temptation came again, but I was armed against it. I laid down the map, set it by compass, and we stepped off briskly to the left with faith in our hearts. It was nothing more than faith, nothing but blind confidence in this man-made machine, whilst a well-trodden road to the right seemed more inviting and by far the more logical direction. Edgar followed with a confidence in my judgment most disheartening to me. What if after all this swank of apparatus I should still be wrong? Little did he realize what a brave show I was making, how every instinct in me damned

the compass as a false prophet; and I lacked the courage to tell him. But the compass was right and we came to the spring on the far side of Salt Hill. Edgar beamed upon me, more confident than ever. We filled our common drinking-cup and sat down by the lunch-box while the sky grew more gloomy every moment. "It's going to rain before long," I ventured, thinking more of the morrow than of the present.

"Oh no, I don't think so," Edgar replied; even the thought of evil offends him.

We went on with the lunch, however, and with aimless chatter besides. For some time we talked about "Salt Hill" and wondered how so graceful a hill came by so common a name. Indeed, nothing could be less agreeable and do more damage to so fair a thing. "Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odour; so doth a little folly outweigh wisdom and honour." And just as we drew the first sweet smoke through Edgar's cigars there came—*a drop of rain.* I was too startled for a moment to remember what credit this drop of moisture must of necessity reflect on me. But for a moment only; then I turned on Edgar with a vile grin.

"Oh no, this is not rain," he exclaimed as he looked at the sky hopefully.

"Not rain!" I cried. "And what, pray, do you call it?"

It is well, no doubt, to believe the best as long as you can, the stoics to the contrary notwithstanding; but there comes a time when a fact is nothing else but a cold, damp fact. Edgar quibbled with the English language more than seemed necessary to me and tried to discriminate between "mist," "shower" and "rain"; but meanwhile he turned up his jacket collar for protection and, also, as it seemed to me, as a subtle indication of the real distinction that lies between intelligent and philosophical man. We both kept up a merry fume of philosophy, but at the same time we ordered ourselves as intelligent men and struck out vigorously for the highroad, a good mile through the woods, and thence along four hard miles to Oscawanna station.

Rain fell intermittently as we walked along the road, exhilarated by the pace we set ourselves. To loiter in the rain is to be conscious merely of the damp and cold. To walk through it rhythmically, however, as we did, is to become in a fashion almost impervious to it and to enjoy it as a natural circumstance. The garments we wear, cut and pressed for fair weather, on the ridiculous assumption that the skies always smile,

are the real fly in our ointment. As members of contemporary society we fear, not the rain which is purer far than the most translucent water, but the damage to our clothes, the wrinkling, the spotting of hats, the ruin to arbitrary curves and flourishes. So much for social defiance of nature, for an unwillingness ever to face it. Sir Austin Feverel's defiant system of education did well enough until Richard went boating on a soft morning in May and beheld a damsel with rose in her cheeks. The rest was less systematic, it is true, but on the whole more beautifully natural.

The colours of the foliage were now less brilliant. Over the distant hills a mist curled, hiding the outlines and quenching the blaze of the maple leaves. Once we heard white-bellied nuthatches "quanking" in an orchard and saw a brown creeper busy on the bark of a tree. The river at Oscawanna was a cold affair. Ducks were bobbing up and down on the waves a few rods out; we fairly shivered while watching them.

But Edgar was still in high spirits, reducing our walk to general principles. I inquired whether, being full of the autumn, he was not on that account melancholy, watching "the last oozings hour by hour."

"Why, no," he replied. "The autumn is spring

for the city. Then the theatres open and the concerts begin and life begins to revive after a summer lassitude. There is nothing melancholy about it."

Even my suggestion that the enjoyment of our promenade had been somewhat curtailed by the rapid walk after the rain began—he could stomach that no better.

"The difference between walking in the woods and on the road was the difference between seeing and being," he said. "The woods appealed to all the finer things in life; the road, to the purely animal. And yet the rhythm of fast walking is a fine thing; you can somehow attune the whole world to your own rhythm. You see less, but you do more; you *are* more, in a sense."

The city was as full of clatter as ever when two hours later we arrived at the Grand Central Terminal.

* * *

*Pierre:* By Jove! That is certainly an amusing yarn. A couple of gay sparks, a drop of rain, and they flee in terror for the train home. So civilization has got this far, that two chaps who attitudinize about loving nature can't put up with a natural phenomenon. It is harder for a man

who prattles about loving nature to prove himself honest than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

*The Author:* Now look here, old Jeery Bones, you don't seem to grasp the fact that I am not trying to be any more logical than human nature. This little account of a walk is not a philosophical discourse but an honest record. I am not trying to rehabilitate civilization. The Lord knows that one man, no matter how great, cannot do that alone.

*Pierre:* Ah, well! If the essay is no more honest than human nature it certainly is not very honest. You say once that there comes a time when rain is nothing but a cold, damp fact, and then later that walking through rain is enjoyment of a natural circumstance. Well, if one statement is true the other is not. So where is your much-vaunted honesty? Tell me that, now, if you can.

*The Author:* My friend, you are nothing if not clever, and you are not clever.

* * *

During the night the temperature went down, but not so low as when we spent a huddled and uncomfortable night at Camp Isolation. And

Hermit Lake was sheltered from the wind, which still kept up a rumbling monotone, by the crags which encircle Tuckerman Ravine from Lion Head to Boott Spur. By morning the back of the gale had been broken. When we emerged from the camp on Tuesday morning to make the first yawning observations of sky and weather, a bank of cirro-stratus clouds shut off the empyrean, and like a blanket had kept the natural heat from rising from the earth. The temperature was more agreeable, but even Pierre predicted rain; accordingly we all felt that there was little hope.

* * *

*Pierre:* You know what a fine day in the mountains means, don't you?

*The Author:* Why, yes, of course. It means that God's in his heaven, and all's right with the world.

"Day!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched—"

*Pierre:* Shut up! Drive Pegasus back into the stable. All I'm trying to do for you is to warn you that it's going to rain.

* * *

We climbed a ledge for a broader sweep towards the east. Clouds covered the whole sky in that significant direction. Once the sun worked through and shone brightly, boiling pure gold indeed. The outlook for good weather, however, was not promising; we considered remaining in camp all day. But Tuckerman Ravine is far too popular a place for seclusion, and besides we were eager to cross two huge ridges of Washington and descend into the Great Gulf beyond, where a camp and a towering cirque of mountains give life in the forest a fresh and singular grace. The beauty of that wild chasm is worth a little wetting. By 9:30 we were through breakfast and on the trail through Tuckerman Ravine.

The Ravine was fairly crowded with tourists on their way to the top of Mt. Washington. Sunday and Monday had been the sort of fine "mountain weather" which inevitably draws climbers to the peaks in great numbers. Some of them, however, inevitably delay, undecided whether to climb or to remain on level ground, and like the foolish

virgins find their equipment incomplete when they need it most. Accordingly, they arrive too late for the ceremonies. Many of those whom we passed in the Ravine had thus been stirred out of their homes one day too late, and a brief shower which came dancing down from the cone reminded them somewhat lugubriously of their fatal sluggishness.

It was good to be under way again. Ahead rose the steep wall of Tuckerman Ravine, rocky and fairly barren, yet whitened here and there by innumerable little waterfalls. Beside the trail Cutler River roared so loudly that human voices could not carry across. At one turning where the trail crosses the river we saw no place where, encumbered by packs, we could get to the other shore without wading. While I was exploring the river-bank, Pierre discovered the weakness in this little barrier, and leaped to the other side. He shouted directions at the top of his voice, but the roar of swift water was all I could hear. Sign-language alone was intelligible. Our packs were again heavy with a full quota of provisions, and the memory of previous climbs in Tuckerman Ravine served to warn us that we had a morning of hard work in prospect. It is said, generally from the depths of an easy-chair, that people

thrive on difficulties. By this time, however, we knew that we throve quite as well on languorous ease; and were willing to leave steep climbing to those who find pleasure in it. Yet our muscles were now so toughened after nine days in the mountains that we clambered up the headwall steadily without resting and were not even breathless when we came to the top. Here we left the other climbers with whom we had been chatting pleasantly all the way, and turned off on the Six Husbands Trail through the Alpine Garden.

## V

IT was a soft, summery day. The sting was gone from the air; the wind was no longer biting. After more than two days of vigorous weather, haze was stealing back into the mountains, taming the wildness of the view and shortening its sweep. It was difficult to believe that we were in the New England highlands, more than 5,000 feet above sea level. We walked on slowly, chatting and frittering away the morning; and at the head of Huntington Ravine we sat down on a shelf of rock and took our ease, overlooking a rugged and pathless chimney up Mt. Washington. A bumble-bee, symbol of hot fields, buzzed around lazily. All about us were miniature blueberry-bushes, an inch and a half in height, each one supporting a sour, unripened berry. The most conspicuous flower was the mountain sandwort. The houstonia, an early spring flower on the lowlands, was scarcely less numerous. In a nearby grassy plain the rank Indian poke and the American star flower grew abundantly. There were

also pyrola and bluebells. Noon approached and passed before we got under way again, over a blackened ridge of jagged rock.

Over that ridge we were beyond the height of land for the day and well on the way to the Great Gulf, most interesting of all corners of the White Mountains. Beyond this great chasm the northern peaks came into view—Clay, Jefferson, Adams and Madison, nobler summits than those which rise to the south of Mt. Washington. We admired their bold contours; but our immediate concern was the Great Gulf which fell away at our feet. Here the Six Husbands Trail drops 2,000 feet in the space of one mile, and the view from the top is a dizzy one. The heavy, forested floor so far below appears as a rough field, covered with stubble. And the roar of Peabody River at the bottom is for ever echoing from the crags on three sides, humming and buzzing all day and night from a wild and crooked gorge, already worn deep, yet deeper every day. For five varied miles Peabody River drains these mountain ridges, whirls in pot-holes, foams over falls, and in the spring grinds heavy boulders along its bed.

We prepared for a strenuous descent. The Six Husbands Trail, it is said, was named in honour of Weetamoo, an Indian queen, whose vitality

wore out six husbands. Well and boldly named; we could not have been in her service long. For down we went, rapidly, always alert to rolling stones and unfortunate slides, checking our descent by clutching at rocks and the branches of trees, amid a veritable bastinado. The trees proved to be the stoutest and yet the most pliable brakes, and we made constant use of them, grasping a spruce branch at the top of a slide, slipping down in a rush, releasing the first branch and clutching another until we were safely at the bottom. By three o'clock we were on the floor of the Gulf and on the trail to camp. The mountain summits were smoking with cloud; soon the rain, anticipated since morning, began to come down gently.

Well, we were prepared for the rain, and with shelter close at hand, could manage to enjoy it, notwithstanding the difficulties it puts in the way of camp-cooking. But we were not prepared to find two men and two women in camp who treated us like social outcasts and indicated that even here in the wilderness the use of the only shelter, provided for all comers, was somewhat in the nature of a concession on their part. Of course we did not make a distinguished appearance. A week and more of travel had soiled and torn our cloth-

ing, had scarred our boots; and our faces, otherwise clean, were black with beards several days old. One would not enter a drawing-room in that fashion. But so long as one has strength enough to enter a mountain shelter, and modesty enough to keep reasonably silent, one's appearance may well be passed over. We resented the air of charity with which these people made a little room for us, and the hostility with which they regarded us, responding in bored monosyllables to our innocuous efforts at conversation. Nevertheless, we cooked luncheon and ate it under shelter while the rain pattered on the roof. Our neighbours "put on a little dog" to impress us, or so we concluded; chattered in a superior manner about the society in which they moved at home and about the hotel where they were summer guests. We sat in camp meekly enough, hoping to be admitted to the conversation; but we were ignored completely, and to break the spell if possible, we went out into the woods in search of a dry tree to chop up for fire-wood. Even this contribution to mutual comfort did not put us on the social register of the Great Gulf. For the rest of the day we languished inoffensively inside the camp, wondering vaguely if, after all, socialism might not be the panacea for a warped and tyrannical civiliza-

tion. Our neighbours were still talking of dances, bridge parties, college class-day functions, and were gossiping about their sophisticated friends when we fell asleep that night with the noise of Peabody River in our ears. It is amazing how we hold fast to the tawdry business of the city when we wander into the woods. After two years and two months on the shores of Walden Pond, Thoreau left the woods because, as he said, "It seemed to me that I had more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one." Most of us live more brittle lives than that. How begrudingly we let new impressions sink in. The woods ring with bird-songs and are redolent of the sweet odours of trees and flowers. But the summer guests knit on the hotel veranda, play cards and take genteel walks along the edge of the woods, meanwhile dressed as carefully as though happiness depended upon circumspect appearance. Even when we penetrate to the heart of the mountains and complain of the weight of our packs, we insist upon carrying the world with us as a gratuitous burden.

After breakfast on Wednesday our camp-mates turned towards home. As they disappeared through the trees we did a song and dance about camp, brandishing the ax and the frying-pan.

The Great Gulf was for the time being our own; there was no one in camp to exchange significant glances over whatever we chose to do or say. We decided first to discover what sort of place we were in—what were its beauties and its peculiar advantages. The Gulf is as impressive a place from the bottom as from the surrounding peaks. To the east the Gothic rim of the forest frets the sky. Everywhere else mountains crowd the horizon, so close that their jagged ridges seem almost overhead. Behind a fringe of woods Peabody River rushes over its turbulent bed a few hundred yards from the camp. Its voice was a steady roar, accompanied by more distinct, finer-articulated, higher-pitched side remarks which more than once by their human quality deceived us into expecting a procession of other campers down the trail. We lazed about in the sunshine, splitting wood enough to last through the next morning, watching the crossbills and pine grosbeaks which flitted about the fireplace, and letting the varied effects of this magnificent chasm sink into our minds. One cannot sit in the doorway of that camp without gazing at the knee of Jefferson which looms so high on the left. True symbol of the Great Gulf, it serves as a gauge against which everything else may be

measured. A few rods upstream we found a noisy, flashing pool of Peabody River in the confusion of boulders, rapids and miniature falls—the knee of Jefferson clearing the tree tops on the western side. The water was too cold for languid bathing. He who bathes in mountain streams must be no more sluggish than they. We plunged in, leaped out again instantly, soaped ourselves, and plunged again. It was invigorating sport. Rubbed dry to a tingle of warmth we washed our clothes again—soaped them on the flat rocks, rinsed them in the swift water which tugged at them gently. Once Pierre let a sock float out of his grasp; he jumped after it, but it was soon tumbling over little falls mockingly and sailing swiftly across pools and hurrying out of sight round a curve in the stream. In the afternoon we strolled upstream to a series of pulsating falls. There for several hundred feet Peabody River tumbles over a succession of transverse ledges and spills at length into a dark pool where the white fury of the water cools into sudden tranquillity, and where the steady, shrill cry of foaming water sinks to a muffled gurgling. We worked our way down river, casting trout flies across the darkest pools. The iridescent fish did not respond, but

the variety of the river, the pot-holes, the ledges worn smooth, the logs cast up securely on the banks, the boulders lodged tightly around the pools, were quite as fascinating and told quite as much of the river.

* * *

*The Author:* Every one talks of the heart of the mountains. That term is sufficiently ambiguous to sustain a dunghill of buncombe. Nevertheless, I say Peabody River is the heart of the Great Gulf.

*Pierre:* You speak for yourself. Call Peabody River the heart of the Great Gulf if you wish, but don't draw me into silly controversies.

*The Author:* Come now, don't stoop to personalities. Either Peabody River is or is not the heart of the Great Gulf. If it is, admit it; if not, why not? Don't let your middleclass prejudices creep out in this fashion, and don't be an intellectual bounder.

*Pierre:* You talk like a schoolmaster. Well, granting that Peabody River is the heart of the Great Gulf, the burden of the proof is upon you.

*The Author:* To be sure it is. The proof is easy enough. The heart is the seat of the affec-

tions, the inmost or essential part, the spirit. Therefore, Peabody River is the heart of the Great Gulf.

*Pierre:* Stop, in the name of St. Denis! Nothing, by Jupiter, is clear according to this way of reasoning. That is equivalent to saying, "The pterodactyl is an extinct bird. Therefore, all extinct birds are pterodactyls." Don't talk like a blooming Auk.

*The Author:* Oh, I can complete the argument if I must. I thought you were clever enough to fill in what I did not supply.

*Pierre:* Yes, you hoped I would make the argument for you.

*The Author:* Nothing of the kind. Let me get in a word edgewise, will you? Confound it —less heat and more light. Now listen. What are the qualities of the Great Gulf's spirit? They are purity, strength, breadth, constant activity, wildness, determination, indifference to obstacles. The Peabody River, which flows through the centre of the Great Gulf and whose little tributaries spill from the summits of the mountains, feeling the steepness of these slopes, has also those abstract qualities of the Gulf. Therefore, the Peabody River is the heart of the Great Gulf.

*Pierre:* The heart of Timbuctoo! A pathetic

fallacy, or I'm the Delphic oracle. You frame the first part of your argument to prove the last part. You have no reverence for the whole truth. You talk like a senator amending the tariff bill.

*The Author:* You have no feeling for beauty.

*Pierre:* Your feeling for beauty is your own pompous egotism.

*The Author:* You're a conceited and sullen blockhead.

* * *

At last we turned back towards the camp, wondering how many others had come there in our absence. The camp was empty. At least for the present we were free. We took our clothes in from the line, where they were fastened with birch twigs split like clothes-pins, and read with much relish Socrates' pleasantries during a visit to Theodota, the popular Athenian courtesan; and his dry reasoning with Euthydemus when that complacent young man proposed publicly to accuse his father of the murder of a servant. Meanwhile, Peabody River played us for gulls, ventriloquizing and chattering like belated campers on the trail. Several times one or the other of us said, "Here comes some one"; but although

we stopped talking and looked down the trail, no one came. When the sun fell behind Jefferson and night crept down the headwall of the Gulf we were still monarchs of this secluded shelter. After supper a bank of stratus clouds moved across the sky, exquisitely formed like fine sand ripples on the sea-shore. We had a brisk camp-fire that night, built of several big logs, which are numerous in that forest. The flames were still leaping and filling the camp with ruddy light and dancing shadows when we rolled up in our blankets.

* * *

Fortunately for the variety and vitality of American literature, and unfortunately, perhaps, for purposes of scientific criticism, it wears no common marks of distinction; it follows no simple scheme of development. From certain points of view, indeed, we have no native literature. In "The Spirit of American Literature," a trenchant, sententious volume, John Macy said as much—"American literature is English literature made in this country. Its nineteenth-century characteristics are evident and can be analysed and discussed with some degree of certainty. Its American characteristics—no critic that I know has

ever given a good account of them. You can define certain peculiarities of American politics, American agriculture, American public schools, even American religion. But what is uniquely American in American literature?"

Since those lines were written, and the dispute they caused has somewhat abated, much has happened in American writing; the presses have, indeed, ground grist. But still one cannot speak too positively of "what is uniquely American in American literature." Is it because we stand too close to the fray? Perhaps, for those further back have clearer notions. "If we look, as we often do, for some common element in the heterogeneous mass of American literature," a writer in the London *Times* once said, "we are bound to fasten at last upon its relation to nature. Through an immense variety of forms, in widely different degrees of consciousness and intensity, a glorification of nature and her powers is constant in American literature from the moment when it begins to display any individuality at all. From Crèvecœur and Cooper onward only one of the great American writers—Edgar Allan Poe—seems to be absolutely untouched by this influence." We who stand close to the fray, however, do not see the units so clearly.

The difficulties in the way of American literature are, like the country, stupendous. Its language we share with a much older and rounded literature, to which we instinctively look for counsel, and which must in many phases always surpass our own. Ours, too, is a broad land of vast differences in climate, terrain, commerce, social and political points of view, creed and inheritance; a land seasoned with a large foreign-born population and always uneasy with a fairly constant flux from state to state and a steady migration from the country to the city. In that myriad of opposing facts may lie the chief quality of American literature, as some students occasionally point out. Perhaps, indeed, its heterogeneity may be its national trait: it may be in essence a many-coloured mosaic. For our neighbours the problem of national traits is vastly more simple. Augustine Birrell may write of his countrymen with a lucid and easy conclusiveness: "The truth is, all Englishmen love the open road, the countryside, hills and heaths, rivers and towns, inns and churchyards, docks and market-places." But such concrete assertions cannot be made about "all Americans" without straying beyond the truth.

Well, what possibilities have we as makers of

a literature? The simple truth is: we have many. One is constantly staggered by the possibilities of America in every department of life. This very complexity of characteristics, all still rough and largely potential—does it not speak eloquently of *possibility?* And if in the past our literature has not pointed to a single goal and has not raised a single, finely-wrought spire of meaning, we need not despair thus early.

In many ways the London *Times* writer is right, and if literature in America does not busy itself specifically about "the glorification of nature," much of it comes close to that now in its exploitation of the small rural town. More and more that becomes a real characteristic of native writing, as the small town becomes a social and economic fact. For there, if anywhere, is the homogeneous group in our population. If ever we are to have a body of literature instinct with the essence of our own country it must ring with the overtones of village life. National literature thrives, by that sign, on provinciality. *"Aux yeux du conteur,"* says Léonie Villard in a study of American novels in the *Mercure de France, "la grande ville ne possède pas alors une signification hautement nationale et ne saurait lui apporter une révélation aussi profondément humaine que celle*

*de la province, du village et toute région où le caractère et la personnalité peuvent, dans un milieu peu complexe, se développer et s'exprimer plus librement.*"

Rural America has undergone broad social changes in the twentieth century and may now be viewed as an entity rather than as a physical event. The pioneering period, declared officially over in 1890, is actually drawing to a close. And a uniformity not always commendable or desirable knits all these communities together in many fundamental characteristics. The history of American pioneering is an epic of the country-side, which has already been sung in some of the best American writing, in Cooper, Parkman, Whitman, Mark Twain, Hamlin Garland, right through to Willa Cather's "My Antonia" and Sinclair Lewis' "Main Street." There is pioneering yet to be done; a pioneering less physical and rugged but none the less vital to American civilization, to refine it, broaden its outlook, increase its resources; to shake it from a certain torpor into consciousness. American writers are already at work, unmindful perhaps of their place in the swing of empire, and for that reason concerned only with surface characteristics; but in the small towns they have found more fertile pasture than

the arid, thrice-worked garden of the city;—and they are writing American literature.

John Erskine complains of the "nature cult" of American literature in his "Literary Discipline"—"We have no American poet, no American novelist; each is the poet or novelist of Vermont or Boston or Maine or Chicago—whatever is to him by birth or habit his natural world. To find a universal utterance of universal experience is the aim and the tendency of art, but the cult of nature compels us to return each in what state he came." The first statement applies best to nineteenth-century writing and to its sandalwood remnants here and there. And the second hits only the *poseur* "nature-lovers"; the fashioners of the "slimy sentences" that Thoreau abhorred, and the recorders of surface phenomena in catalogue array. To those who have dreamed as well as written, however, the ultimate is all the same, the source of life everywhere is common; and the local mountains, streams and birds are merely the local symbols. Those who write of rural America are not on that account local, any more than Chaucer is local or Ike Walton. The Matterhorn is higher than Chocorua. The principle, however, is the same.

In the provinciality about which Mr. Macy

and Mr. Erskine both complain in their respective fashions, the New England school most offended. New England writing of the second half of the nineteenth century was "English writing made in this country," and, to slip into generalities, "each was the poet of Vermont or Boston or Maine." Emerson and Thoreau, it appears, must be excepted; Howells, too, one of the ornaments of our literature, who gave up Boston when it ruled too unbendingly. But Whittier, Longfellow, Holmes, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Bryant, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Whipple, Aldrich, even Lowell with his psuedo-classicism and his almost sophisticate "Fable for Critics"—they must be reckoned among the localists who conformed to British manners. They wrote much that is fine; one can ask for nothing gentler, sweeter or more composed; but they seldom touched national strings. That tradition still serves for the gentle humour of Samuel McC. Crothers and the pleasant and scholarly essays of Bliss Perry. Of the native New England writers to-day only Robert Frost and Elliot Paul have experimented; of these two, only Robert Frost has blown something fresh and native into American letters. Literary vitality, as well as social and economic,

has run out in that little corner—the corner nearest England; it is evening there now, gentle evening; the day's work has been honestly done. And at high noon when the gardens were being cultivated industriously, America was still too disjointed and too badly balanced for growing a native literature.

Westward the course of empire swings its way, and at an hour, too, when primitive America settles down and looks within itself. The American literature about which this screed is concerned now bubbles out of the Middle West, with a "New York connexion" whither most writers eventually repair. It is a strange literature, too, shocked by its own sentimental aridity, intolerant, unhappy, with a dash of pubescent iconoclasm. First came "The Spoon River Anthology," steaming with courage in substance and manner, like the prodigal son—who, it must be remembered, had at least seen the world, and had thrust his knife into other fatted calves if not this one. And in novels and verses others, too, have come home with fetid reports—of provinciality, brittle imagination, deep-rooted prejudice, cramped horizons and a sauce that is seldom quite pure. Well, disillusioned youth has just such illusions and just such engaging conceits; it has courage

and energy besides. The torpid folk of whom all these things are said, for the most part quite truly, are no more captains of their souls than most contemporaries. They may live in a yellow—or even golden—fog of prejudice, but they are still an aspiring society, merely hedged round by limited opportunity. They yearn to know about art and literature, bring music into their houses by the usual means; and they regard all human refinements with respect. The country over, they are as similar in their ambitions as they are in their localisms. They are never European peasants, bound by inheritance and custom to the soil. They live expectant and ready as free-born Americans. The true portrait will catch something of both sides of the shield.

In the novels of Miss Willa Cather we begin to recognize ourselves. And if there be any truth in the statement that literature of rural America approaches native literature more than any other kind, her work must stand now as the best evidence. For although her locale is limited to a small area in a large country, and she looks backward rather than forward or around her, her novels are for all the world; and they do not suffer from provincialism like the New England works of a half-century ago. "No one wishes

to contradict the statement that 'My Antonia' has historical value for its minute and colourful depiction of life on the Nebraska prairies and in the Nebraska towns about 1885," writes T. K. Whipple of Willa Cather in the New York *Evening Post*. "The point is merely that after all Miss Cather is only secondarily a historian and an anthropologist; that (in spite of the reviews) she has not done single-handed for Nebraska what Guizot and M. Joanne between them have done for France; that her novels may interest people who have no special cult for Nebraska. In short, she writes fiction; she is a creator primarily, a recorder incidentally, if at all." She is primarily an artist, and the strength of her pictures of life in rural America is precisely the weakness of those who are not artists but rather exposers of local skeletons. "My Antonia," "One of Ours" and "A Lost Lady" hum with artistic harmonies—and just where story leaves off and character begins, and where character leaves off and *mise-en-scène* begins, and just how much style contributes to the whole composition you cannot say—because Miss Cather is an artist. An artist? More; an American artist, as her views on international matters suggest. For her sentimental vignettes of the Great War in "One of

Ours," written from evidence apparently second-hand, as though this international turmoil were her first anxious look across the water (as, indeed, it was for America by and large) and as though the human cost were the main thing, and not the affront against Christian society—all that is essentially American. Place beside "One of Ours" Mrs. Wharton's "A Son at the Front" and the contrast comes sharply. Mrs. Wharton's book does not run the full gauntlet of social issues involved in the war; the viewpoint, however, is not essentially American; she discusses the etiquette of well-behaved Americans in war time. Miss Cather writes American literature.

Many years before Willa Cather began to write, the American novel had been already enriched from the pen of William Dean Howells. His novels flowed from the real sources of life, for his own career had taught him what they were and had fitted him for his profession more completely than any of his American contemporaries. He was fearless and independent while others charmed one another by their good-fellowship. He had the heroic misfortune to be neither radical nor reactionary and to be accordingly disliked by both camps. In his youth America was not prepared to be treated in novel-form in the manner

his talents directed, and in his old age young America swept by him tumultuously in a rush of iconoclasm. Novelists, like politicians, suffer when they are not "in the news." Howells suffered as much as Miss Cather has profited by that nebulous leader of forces.

"Poe has no truck with Indians or Nature. He makes no bones about Red Brothers and Wigwams," says D. H. Lawrence with a civilized gesture. And it must be confessed that literature which has too much "truck with Indians or Nature" is not completely representative. Even at their best our novels of the land cannot typify the entire country, as rural literature typifies no other country, not even Russia. For the city dominates literature. Commerce and royalties, the *business* of publishing, exact that much toll.

According to the classical tradition, when ideas were uniform and completely expanded, borrowed freely and worked again, human nature overshadowed the landscape. Socrates preferred city life to country life because he learned more from man than from nature. A journalist of sorts, Cicero lived off the city. Did not the Trojans build a city and fling a wall about it as soon as they were able? Dr. Johnson was no nature-sentimentalist, or at least Boswell would have it

so: "We walked in the evening in Greenwich Park. He asked me, I suppose by way of trying my disposition, 'Is not this very fine?' Having no exquisite relish of the beauties of nature, and being more delighted with the busy hum of men, I answered, 'Yes, Sir: but not equal to Fleet Street.' *Johnson:* 'You are right, sir.' "

Literary men are, indeed, indigenous to the city: Bacon, Molière, Marlowe, Pepys, Dryden, Addison, Sheridan, Lamb, Balzac, Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, Dickens, Murger, Poe, Huneker, Baudelaire, Holmes, O. Henry, France, de Gourmont. And of those commonly put down as "romanticists" and poets of the out-of-doors it is difficult to isolate any of real distinction who were not also identified with the city. Who shall distinguish the Rousseau of the Hermitage from the Rousseau of Paris? He liked to consider them as two men; and fancied that the Rousseau of the country was the writer of naked truths. "My mind was sufficiently fertile in great projects," he said, "but in the bustle of the city the execution of them had gone on but slowly." Yet unless he himself had whisked about in the bustle of Paris he would have had little to put on paper or at any rate something far different from what went there eventually. Rousseau did not love nature

for its own sake but for its contrast with the city. The purest crystallizations of nature in literature glitter on the pages of Thoreau and Hudson and with less sincerity on the pages of Borrow, Muir and Burroughs. It is difficult to name any others who were not at least preponderantly "citizen." Only Walt Whitman saw the same truths in both and wrote of them as one.

Nevertheless, city literature in America is so far from wearing the earmarks of American literature that Professor Erskine's classical gesture might well be thrown in the opposite direction: the cult of city, rather than of nature, compels us to return each in what city he came. We write of Boston, New York, Chicago, New Orleans, St. Louis, Washington—not of America. And this may be because in our city literature we write of manners, not of human struggles and ambitions, and never of human dreams. There is more sweat than perfume in America; there is more toil than leisure, more energy than boredom, more blind hope than sophistication. In a clumsy, lumbering fashion Theodore Dreiser has plastered those less elegant qualities on the pages of his novels of the American city. Frank Norris did that, too. Other novelists of the city have written with nimbler pens, and in their concern

with the surface flutter of city life they have written literature occasionally: but American literature, never. And the writers who know only the city know little of our country.

As places in which to write the cities suffer variously, and for reasons often considered advantages. For the young writer dependent upon the product of his pen the cost of living there retards and dissipates his artistic progress. Rentals set by business men for other business men do not fit the intermittent incomes of writers and artists; and the bare expenses of food and shelter are not by any means the whole cost of city living. Hogarth once drew "the distressed poet" in a squalid garret room in London, trying vainly to recreate on paper the lines he has in his head, while his wife berates him on the one hand and the landlord with his long bill threatens ruin on the other. Distressing, indeed, and no less true for the years which have gone by since. But many have survived; Johnson and Garrick went up to London with a few coppers in their pockets and in due time established themselves there.

The writer's pocket, however, may hold out longer than his head; and of nearly every one who slips into journalism this holds true. For in this confusion of cross-purposes and multiplicity of

ideas surcharging the intellectual atmosphere, a windy cyclone of the mind, the writer finds little seclusion for attacking one idea alone. Other ideas which seem to be the same but are not come in with every newspaper and caller. A few men have strength of mind enough to be themselves—a few, like Santayana, Symons, Moore, France and Barrie; but most drift into the social swing and sacrifice ideas before the fetish of personality. That is the greatest weakness of writing-men.

It has many jolly, lusty precedents in literature. At Tabard Inn the Canterbury pilgrims matched their tales amidst a storm of applause or hisses and reproof. That was a robust company of story-tellers, all close to their critics. What talented wastrels frequented Mermaid Tavern! Dryden directed literature from an arm-chair in Will's Coffee House, as did Johnson, supping at the Mitre or the Crown and Anchor, or at the houses of his friends. Why, even in this decadent day, should not our brave young wits and blades come together for literary brawls?

Well, they should, and in fact they do, but with little sobriety in their meeting. For most of them it comes to be the be-all and end-all of their craft. And of what do the literary lions roar? Of æsthetics, technique, of learned things? Bless you,

reader, never—"well, hardly ever." For they, too, are human men, and gossip like others about the trade, how goes the literary market, and of the conceits and manners of their friends; a bustle of tittle-tattle about all who have finally got into the news, warped largely by a longing to be in the news as well.

And here, alas! our criticism is made. "Criticism, when it is not mere talk about literature," says Arthur Symons, "concerns itself with the first principles of human nature and with fundamental ideas." Now, first principles and fundamental ideas have naught to do with the chatter of the gay chaps into whose hands American criticism has fallen. They wear the mantle and get their names in print at the tops of neatly printed columns; but they do not differ from other young men in volatile spirits and love of good times, or in human vanities. A busy life it is, with luncheons, teas and dinners; with columns to fill meanwhile, with books to be read as thoroughly as may be. The "fundamental ideas" may be found ready-made in copy-books, to suit the circumstances; or, as often happens, the circumstance can be made to suit the ideas. Our criticism becomes, indeed, ecstatic patter (*"ces notices exiguës et precieuses, où écrivain a la pensée de briller,*

*et dont chaque paragraphe est effilé en epigramme,"* as Sainte-Beuve complained of an earlier journalistic period), all at the expense of the book, whilst the cart runs before the horse and the critic comes off better celebrated than the book. "Who thinks of making his critique a work of art itself?" Poe inquired of American critics of his day. Few do to-day, although criticism owes at least this to the literary health of any period. There can be no check on mediocre writing in novels and essays when criticisms are done artlessly in slovenly style, in "journalese," or in the precious or turgid style much cultivated in the press, swollen and flatulent, "taken for the thing it resembles, as a wavering image in water resembles the rock it reflects." All this may seem remote from the subject of these paragraphs, the city as a literary workshop; but it is not. American criticism is so much a city product that the one or two exceptions need not be here set down; in fine, a product of the fortuitous social life towards which most young writers are attracted and in which they waste their time, muddle their ideas and sink their personalities.

In the city most books are written from other books. Literary fashions run rapidly through the community and suit the wearers indiscrimin-

ately. "We worship not the graces, nor the Parcæ, but the Fashion. She spins and weaves and cuts with full authority. The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same." Season by season the novels from one city differ from one another only in pattern; the cut is all the same; and the literary columns frisk about the same topics with unimaginative zeal. Those who make their bread by literature and journalism must give out, day after day—give out always, and seldom absorb; when they write so profusely the wonder is not that they fail to expand intellectually or to increase their stature by a cubit part, but that they maintain even a constant level of journeyman wit. In America city literature is journalistic, created for the day thereof, with a "vain fume" about the book of the hour. Reporting flourishes, introspective literature has no voice in the assembly. New manners fly over the community like a pestilence, the germs carried on the wind into every house; the literary board of health may post each house as caught in the plague.

If this comment exaggerates and makes no account of literary health, it does not pervert the social structure of writing in the city. For such

scribbling day by day skims the surface of a breathless life and has no roots deep in "first principles" and "fundamental ideas." The city life for most writers prevents the sort of cultivation which may be pursued best in seclusion. Many creative American writers, coming to that conclusion, do their writing in the country. So Pope concluded, too:

> First follow Nature, and your judgment frame,
> By her just standard, which is still the same.

"I do not wish to look with sour aspect at the industrious manufacturing village, or the mart of commerce," said Emerson. "I love the music of the water-wheel; I value the railway; I feel the pride which the sight of a ship inspires; I look on trade and every mechanical craft as education also. But let me discriminate what is precious herein. There is in each of these works an act of invention, an intellectual step, or short series of steps, taken; that act or step is the spiritual act; all the rest is mere repetition of the same a thousand times. And I will not be deceived into admiring the routine of handicrafts and mechanics, how splendid soever the result, any more than I admire the routine of the scholars or clerical class.

"Men stand in awe of the city, but do not hon-

our any individual citizen, and are continually yielding to this dazzling result of numbers that which they would never yield to the example of any one."

In America the city holds little for writers save their cash reward. As a workshop for most of them it conceals the principles of literature beneath a clutter of abortive detail and lures them away from the sources of the art they cultivate. And as the subject-matter of novels, poems and essays it falls short of American literature; it represents the least homogeneous life in our country.

* * *

Night comes early and dawn comes late in Great Gulf. We were up on Thursday morning long before the sun spilled over Chandler Ridge and warmed this deep canyon where the chill of night lingers far into the day. We were up early, earlier than on any day previous, for an arduous journey was ahead of us in uncertain weather. We had scrambled into the Gulf on Tuesday with some physical effort; that would be as nothing, however, in comparison with the effort required to get out again, to scale the steep ridges of Mt. Washington and so get under way for Mizpah

Spring Camp on Mt. Clinton. Before retiring on Wednesday evening we had consulted the map most earnestly; we had followed the course of all trails up from the Gulf—up Jefferson, up Clay, up Washington from Hermit Lake, and up the Six Husbands Trail by which we had come in. Was it possible that all the paths climbed precipitous ridges? Was there no easy course for the lackadaisical climber? Alas! we had come to an impasse; and, except towards the Glen House, where no real mountaineer can bear to go, we must climb with our hands as well as our feet to leave this forested valley, and so we had concluded to storm the Six Husbands trail again as the easiest route to Mt. Clinton. A certain French king of childhood myth is said to have marched his men right up a hill and marched them back again. And so the innocent myths of childhood became the realities of mature old age. We surveyed the high ridges behind camp with a patient but weary eye and hoped that the good God would bless our labours upward. Even to the most self-sufficient there comes a day when human powers are in themselves too weak for necessary achievements.

It seemed a sacrilege to be astir so long before the rising of the sun. Scraggles of white mist floated like ghosts about the summit of Jefferson;

the air was cold and moist; the rough stone hearth, where merry fires had been dancing ten hours ago, was wet with dew and dead; the woods were filled with night. While nature sleeps, man ought to sleep as well. Shivering with cold, we set about kindling a fire mechanically, without enthusiasm, still half-asleep, as though we had been imposed upon. It was a phlegmatic procedure. Among the refinements of Great Gulf Camp is a table of rough slabs nailed to tree-stumps, with benches nailed on either side of similar material. Well, it is rough, to be sure; but few urban restaurants are half as picturesque. When we had breakfast smoking on that table and sat down to this mountain-girdled meal, we blessed the good fortune which had put all this rugged beauty at our personal disposition and cursed the stupid impulse which set us on the trail again in search of other places. It is hard to kill the instinct which moves us on to new adventures. Some people call that instinct progress. And for proof they point unimaginatively to the modern world about them.

* * *

*Pierre:* Look here, stop moralizing, in heaven's name! The facts of this journey and

its impressions are quite sufficient. Holy smoke, why argue about them! I no sooner get interested in this record than a dash of moralizing affects me like an emetic.

*The Author:* Come, come! Temper thy speech, my friend. Moralizing is no more disgusting, I'm sure, than such coarse language.

*Pierre:* That may be true, but consider the provocation. You can't poke animals forever without expecting them to snarl. I'll put up with almost any amount of virtue in this book, but I'm damned if I'll put up with morality.

* * *

The dishes were washed and the packs were ready by half past seven. We smoked a last pipe leisurely in the doorway, then swung the packs on our shoulders and started down the trail. The sun had come out for a brief interval but now hid behind the clouds.

The eerie voices of Peabody River had been in our ears now for thirty-six hours, singing occult music to which we responded, but which we could scarcely understand. For a few rods the Six Husbands Trail follows the river closely, through chambers of varying music, and then turns away at a right angle. We plodded on

slowly, over soft, cushionlike moss, under trees whose bark was velvety with moss, towards the flank of Mt. Washington, always farther away from the river, whose voice grew constantly dimmer. Then up we went at a breathless scramble, leaning against the trees to recover lost wind, and up once more with gritted teeth. Almost before we realized it, we were high above the floor of Great Gulf. And now the roar of Peabody River came loud again, a siren cry beseeching us to turn round and come back again. God knows it was hard enough to go on without that haunting entreaty. By nine o'clock we had climbed the 2,000 feet to the parapet, and still the noise of Peabody River echoed in our ears.

Black clouds were tearing across the summits of Clay, Jefferson and Adams, gradually turning to white, floating up buoyantly and leaving the peaks clear. Some fragments drifted across the Great Gulf where new currents of air tore them apart and blew them high above the summits. We were treated also with mountain echoes, created by blasting on the carriage-road. The voices of Clay, Jefferson and Adams were speaking in quick succession. We timed them. The first eight seconds after the blasts were

soundless. Then echoes began on Clay and thundered round the bow of the Great Gulf for seventeen seconds—twenty-five seconds in all from report to last echo.

The clouds were heavy over the cone of Mt. Washington, and as we climbed up the ridge towards the Alpine Garden we were soon engulfed in them. They were forming on the headwall of Huntington Ravine where a damp south-east wind was cooled and condensed on the cold rocks of the mountain. Objects thirty feet away were invisible. And our progress from cairn to cairn was curiously uncertain and mysterious, and sometimes almost an adventure. Sometimes the fog blew away momentarily, clearing to the tip of the mountain, a thousand feet above. Such moments were reassuring, for we knew that we were still on the right trail. Then, the mist settling down heavy again, we were alone in an unknown land. Thus for a half-hour we plodded across the murky Alpine Garden until we heard the roar of a mountain torrent ahead and below. It was Cutler River, foaming down the headwall of Tuckerman Ravine. While we rested on the crest of that ridge the clouds rolled up in ponderous masses, uncovering the floor of the Ravine

until Hermit Lake was visible; and finally Pinkham Notch and Wildcat Mountain, veiled with the most translucent blue possible. But the view was soon cut off. By noon-time the clouds were dense once more. We took our bearings by compass and map, and set out across Bigelow Lawn to the Crawford Path. Somewhere on that trail was a spring where we hoped to cook lunch, and we hurried on in search of it.

Man's presence on mountain summits, as Thoreau explained, and as this apostolic book has constantly repeated, is always a slight insult to the gods; and on cloudy days when fog tears over the summits it is the basest sort of intrusion, indulged in only by prying busybodies who peep in upon things intended for nobler eyes. Occasionally, even on Mt. Washington, the gods seek vengeance; then the intruders never return to the walks of man. As we twisted on through the columns of damp crags, like giants with their heads in the cloud, and pushed into the wet gale sweeping up from Oakes Gulf with its panoply of mist, we knew ourselves to be intruders—intruders on a day of superhuman toil, when the gods were concerned exclusively with their own business; and we knew that we must make shift for ourselves like the chance spectator at a

theatrical rehearsal, whose chief concern is to keep out of the way. To walk the exposed ridges on such a roaring day is an experience; it is not, however, a pleasure.

Suddenly rain beat into our faces. We dropped the packs, pulled out the ponchos, and in the gale pulled them over our heads while they flapped angrily, and the ends struggled not to be caught. With much difficulty, and with the rain stinging his face and hands, Pierre managed to tie mine in place; and then I performed the same service for him. By this time the storm was fairly upon us, hissing on the wet rocks, spattering and singing in the pools, blowing up aggressively under our hats, rattling on the hard surface of the ponchos—a mad whirl and scurry of rebellious elements. The mountain ridges took the storm patiently, well used to this fury and more, streaming with rain; and the little spruce-trees which grew wherever they had footing bent before the gusts of wind, "writhed and reached and feared the rain."

Lunch-hour came while we still had several miles to walk on the exposed Crawford Path, under the summits of Monroe and Pleasant which were battling with the storm above, where we could not see them; but although we were hungry

we hurried on, eager only to reach shelter as soon as possible. A sign marking the bypath to the summit of Mt. Pleasant was our first indication of distance covered; we took new heart and pushed on through the fog. At last the summit-cairn of Mt. Clinton loomed up, as serene as a lighthouse in a rolling sea. Here we might leave the Crawford Path and drop down into the woods, and into a less truculent world, like a ship's cabin while a storm roars outside. The trees were dripping, and the black forest muck was ankle-deep and slippery. We sloshed down the mountain ponderously, through trees and fog, slipping and sliding, to Mizpah Spring Camp. Hats and ponchos were dripping, leggings were damp, and boots were muddy; but except for wet knees we were dry and warm and were glad to be out of the blustering sky-line storm. The trees around camp were bright with glassy drops of rain, and the fog, writhing and lapping, softened the outlines of the forest. A young married couple had reached camp before us and was presiding over its destinies with kindly importance. We did not like to pry into their household secrets, but it was three o'clock, and the weather thick and forbidding. While they watched us with heavy eyes we went in

search of a standing dead tree for fire-wood and combined luncheon and dinner in one gluttonous meal—baked beans, bacon and fried crackers, boiled rice and raisins and cocoa. And being hungry after eight hours of walking and fasting, we felt disposed to give to our eating those familiar flourishes which, by common consent, denote the not-too-civilized man's enjoyment of his food. But Pyramus and Thisbe exchanged solemn glances, while Thisbe drew up closer to Pyramus and laid her hand in his. He was *her man!* We recognized that and respected it; indeed, we felt no desire to dispute it, and considered that additional proof was superfluous. In his complaint of young married people, Lamb wrote: "They carry this preference [for each other] so undisguisedly, they perk it up into the faces of us single people so shamelessly, you cannot be in their company a moment without being made to feel, by some indirect hint or open avowal, that *you* are not the object of this preference." If that were all, one might hold one's peace. But it is infinitely more serious. One is made to feel that they represent a higher caste to which only the married are admitted, and that all others are shiftless loiterers. They are not married a month before they pretend to look with curious

amusement upon all those who are still unattached. And what lengths they go, to prove themselves the sole custodians of the world's honour! Pyramus and Thisbe seemed to regard it as no more than simple justice that we should split up the wood for the camp-fire, lay the blaze at their feet and keep it burning in the rain, as black slaves look after the comfort of Oriental kings and queens. What we had considered a bit of courtesy then became a leaden duty. They spread themselves comfortably before the fire, whilst we were crowded to the corners and eked out a modicum of lonely enjoyment by smoking and listening to the patter of the rain on the roof. They thrust their secrets in our faces, referring to the various parts of their camping-equipment by fanciful names which they alone knew, and referring also to the friends of whom they talked by mysterious initials. Finally Pyramus fumbled about inside his pack and pulled out—of all things!—a ukulele; and after a bit of preliminary tuning Pyramus and Thisbe joined their voices (as marriage had joined their souls!) in husky caterwauling. At length, with a pitiful and melancholy air, we crept into our cold end of the camp, while Pyramus and

Thisbe, sitting close together and talking in a monotone, enjoyed the warmth of our camp fire. The rain sang on the roof and dripped into little pools on the ground.

The clouds were dampening the trees near the camp when we got up early on Friday morning. Our last morning in the woods! Only yesterday, it seemed, we had entered them, clean, shaven and soft of muscle. There was no real joy in our preparations for breakfast, nor in our packing to leave the woods. By all accounts, Socrates took his cup of hemlock more cheerfully. By 7:30 we were on our way out of camp and down the three miles to Crawfords for a morning train to Boston. Our dejection was not lightened by the thought that while we were again at work in the crowded city, the successive days of rain and sunshine, the pageantry of cloud formations, and all the phenomena of the mountains would go on as serenely as usual. They were much to us while we were nothing to them. Not far from camp a spruce partridge stood alert in the trail; like all this species of the deeper woods he was not afraid to let us pass within a few feet. A hermit-thrush called languidly in the woods near the edge of the forest. In a tree near Gibbs

Brook a woodpecker set up a boisterous racket —an Arctic three-toed woodpecker at last. At Passaconaway we had tried vainly to metamorphose a hairy into this rarer species. But here there was no need of such charlatanry; bird-glasses and bird-book both identified him clearly. Just then a crow cawed. We had not heard one since we left the fields at Chocorua, and his blustering note set us down into the social world as effectively as the circumspect grounds of the Crawford House a few rods beyond.

Rain began falling again before we boarded the train at Crawfords, and continued as we rumbled through the Notch. The tops of Willard, Webster and Crawford merged into the clouds so delicately that one could not see where clouds and mountains met. We smoked, gazed out of the car window, and read snatches of Socrates.

So the time passed until the train drew into Boston, and we joined the holiday throngs in the North Station. We bought the afternoon newspapers mechanically and read the headlines— "Railroad Parleys Off"; "Menace in Coal Crisis." Thus, for two weeks the same news had served its daily purpose as though newspapers chronicled

progress, not apathy. So we dropped back into the same world we had left, with nothing lost and with two weeks of living on the credit side.

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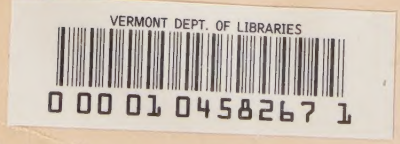

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